The meeting on Monday 10th August 2015 will be at
Tiger Tiger
29 Haymarket, London SW1Y 4SP.

O n Monday 10th August 2015

7pm   Newsbyte

7.15   Software Snapshot

7.30   Announcements
There will be a photowalk in August. The most likely date is Sunday 16th August and it will take place in or around Regents park starting with a picnic then going off to take photos.

The next Apple Special Event is predicted for September 9th.

My working procedure

In an attempt to make life simpler and more secure, I now keep all my photographs and specific projects on separate SSDs. I now have five of these drives, mostly in 500GB size but some are 250GB. They are small (about 10x7x1 cm) light weight and of course they have no moving parts. The ones I bought through Maplin on line are Samsung. They are of course much more expensive than conventional portable hard drives, but they are very much lighter and they have no moving parts. I started by keeping each drive in a case at a cost of about £14 a go, but now I keep them out of their cases and connect them to my MacBook Pro with a SATA to USB cable. I also used to load them all onto a USB hub but often not all of them would be recognised, so now I just have two at most plugged into the two USB locations on the MacBook. Anytime I want to work on the next edition of SoundByte I just plug in the appropriate SSD and open the files, work on them, then save them back to the drive. There are two other publications I work on regularly and then there is my ever increasing collection of photographs stored on two fairly full 500GB drives. I find it all a very secure and a most satisfactory way to store and work with all my files and photos wherever I may be and without the clutter and weight of conventional external drives with their weight, heat and motors that had failed far too frequently. for my peace of mind. My camera photos are stored on the SD cards I use in the camera and when a card is full I place it in an envelope with the contents and dates recorded. I then put a new SD card into the camera and these days I mainly use 8GB cards that are surprisingly inexpensive buying through Amazon. By working in this way I feel far more secure and less likely to lose any of my work.
Maurice Baker

Your Mac can do millions of things,

but sometimes even the best of us forget some of the cool stuff it can do - so we're here to help jog your memory.

Some of these tips need recent versions of OS X - such as OS X 10.9 Mavericks or OS X 10.10 Yosemite - but not all of them do. In some cases, some are little features that Apple has sneaked into upgrades that you might have totally missed, and some might be a classic light-bulb moment of "I'd totally forgotten you could do that!"

This is neither a formal nor an exhaustive list; we've just put our heads together to gather the tips we think are awesome.

1. Do unit conversions in Spotlight

As well as being able to do calculations in Spotlight, in Yosemite it gets an extra trick: unit conversions. You can do specific unit conversions if you need to – "13 stone in lbs", say – but it's also intelligent enough that in many cases if you just give it the amount and unit you want to convert, it will suggest not just the likely conversion but also plenty of alternates. Type in '$1299' and you'll immediately be told what that is in Sterling (based presumably on what's set as your native currency in the Language & Region pane of System Preferences), and then when the window folds down to show more results, you'll see Euros, Yen and so on.

2. Talk to and listen to your Mac!

In OS X 10.8, the Mac's ability to listen to you as well as talk is really impressive. Although these are sometimes framed as being accessibility features, they can be useful for everyone. For example, it's a good idea to read through any important text before you send it off, but it's easy to skip mistakes when you're reading your own work. Instead, select the text and go to Edit > Speech > Start Speaking. You can control the speed and pick from a range of different voices (our favourite's the Scottish 'Fiona') in the Dictation & Speech System Preference pane.

If you find you use the feature often, you should enable the option to trigger speaking aloud using a keyboard shortcut - the default is Option+Esc, which you can change in the Dictation & Speech pane. (If you do have restricted vision, investigate the VoiceOver feature in the Accessibility pane of System Preferences too; this can read aloud buttons and other on-screen items, and more.)

Your Mac is just as good a listener as it is a talker, though. Not only can you control your Mac using Speakable Items (check the Accessibility pane) but in OS X 10.8 you can also dictate text anywhere you would type. By default you just press the Function key twice and then start talking.

3. Run Windows

We know, we know - who wants to run Windows? But sometimes it's handy, whether to play the latest games or run some niche piece of software that has no Mac equivalent. You can either run Windows alongside OS X with a virtualisation app such as VMware Fusion, Parallels Desktop or VirtualBox, or partition your hard disk to install Windows on to run it full-bore on your hardware using Boot Camp Assistant (in your Utilities folder).

4. Add clips from websites to Dashboard

Remember Dashboard? Introduced with 10.4, this overlay holds 'widgets' that can perform handy little tasks - Apple still hosts a catalogue of them at apple.com/downloads/dashboard. One oft-forgotten trick is that you can make your own widgets by clipping from web pages. The best bit is that the web page remains live. Here's how to do it (we're going to clip out some cricket scores, but it will pretty much work for any part of any site).

1. Navigate to the page you want to clip a section from in Safari. (It has to be Safari, not Chrome, Firefox or whatever.) You can clip out information that's essentially static - say, a list of keyboard shortcuts you want to refer to - or stuff that's changing all the time.

2. Go to the File menu and choose Open in Dashboard…; now you can mouse over sections of the web page, and it's usually smart about snapping to appropriate areas. If not, just click then drag the handles. Once you're done, click Add at the top right.

3. Once the clipping has been added to your Dashboard, you can click the i at the bottom right to flip it round. Here you'll see options for the frame; pick the one you like. The web clipping should update anyway, but if you need to force a manual refresh, click it, then tap Command+R.

5. Type exotic characters

As well as letters and symbols you see on your keyboard, you can type a bewildering array of special characters. You may already be familiar with typing accents such as for café (in that case you either type Option+E then E again or, on OS X 10.7 or later, hold down the E until you get extra options) but you'll find there are many more.

Go to the Edit menu of most apps and you'll see Special Characters at the bottom. This panel gives you access to a huge range of symbols you can drag into your documents. Not all apps or operating systems support them, but these are mostly part of the cross-platform Unicode standard. There are probably more than you see at first, too; click the cog to reveal more.

Emoji (those fun, colourful characters available in OS X 10.7 or later) are a notable exception to this cross-platform world. They're not Apple-only, but your recipient might not be able to see them.

Apple Pay and the Apple Watch, happy playmates

I've been fretting about not having a credit or debit card enabled for Apple Pay. Last week there was a flurry of activity and I found that I had two likely suspects in my wallet so I decided to have a go.

Setting up on the iPhone is straightforward: Go to the Passbook application in Settings and tap to add a card. The camera springs into life and it's then a simple task to scan the card. The system reliably reads the card number and identifies the issuer but is less precise on expiry date. I had to enter this manually, as I did the secure code from the back of the card. Once this is done, the card issuer sends a verification code by SMS and this is entered into Passbook to complete the installation.

Watch hitch

I had less success initially with the Watch. I dutifully ticked the "Mirror Phone" option in the Apple Watch app on the phone but was surprised to see that neither credit card was visible on the watch. After a lot of reading of help papers and forums on the Apple site I realised that the two devices are independent for the purposes of Apple Pay. It is necessary to set up the card again on the Watch, but through the Apple Watch app on the phone. Confused? You will be.

This is only an initial problem. Once you've understood and done it and successfully added a card, you are in business. In use, Apple Pay is even more simple. With the phone it's

a matter of using Touch ID on the home button and waving the device across the swipe reader. Transactions (which are limited to £20 in the UK, just like swipe purchases) appear on the phone as a list.

Transaction check

With the Watch things are slightly different. When you are ready to pay you simply double press the side button and the screen tells you to place the phone near to the card reader. An encouraging buzz on the wrist tells you the transaction is complete. There is, however, one big difference. There seems to be no way to check transactions from the Watch or the phone and you have to wait for the items to appear on the credit card bill. This is a problem for me since I am in the habit of entering all transactions immediately into my favourite accounts system, Moneydance. I'll have to remember to keep hold of the receipts.

Initially, I had assumed that Apple Pay on the Watch and the iPhone would be completely integrated but I now understand that they are separate systems, almost certainly for security reasons. it's something we can live with. But it would certainly be nice to see a list of transactions either on the Watch or in the iPhone app.

Yesterday I used the Watch to buy groceries at Marks & Spencer, much to the delight of the staff who hadn't seen this magic trick before. Then, later, a coffee at Caffe Nero was the occasion for more interested discussion. I was the first Watch payer in that particular branch. I love being a pioneer and that was what frustrated me about the delay in implementation by many card issuers. Today I did a big purchase, a MacBook at £1,299. A couple of presses of the button and the transaction was approved in a couple of seconds. As far as I know, though, only Apple accepts Apple Pay for sums over £20.

Apple Pay is likely to become one of the most-used features of the Watch—or the iPhone for that matter—because it is just so convenient and easy. It is the future, as we move inexorably to a cashless society. I used to get very annoyed when the person in front at Starbucks insisted on using a credit card for a £2.25 coffee; all that palaver and delay with entering PIN numbers was a sure-fire irritant. Then came swipe cards and I realised I was less affronted. Now it's watch and phone swiping and I feel quite relaxed about it. I realise that within a year or two NFC payments will be the norm.

Learn to Record Anything with "Take Control of Audio Hijack"

Recording audio from a Mac app is conceptually simple, but without the right tools and know-how, it can be tremendously frustrating. Adam and the TidBITS crew have long relied on Rogue Amoeba's Audio Hijack for all recording tasks, and now we're pleased to bring you Kirk McElhearn's new "Take Control of Audio Hijack" to explain both the basics and the subtleties of Audio Hijack 3's new flowchart-like interface, which is vastly different from the previous version's approach (see "Audio Hijack 3 Bumps Up the Volume," 30 January 2015).

You'll learn how to capture and enhance any audio playing on a Mac, with step-by-step instructions for common scenarios — including recording audio playing in Safari, capturing Skype and FaceTime calls, digitizing your old LPs, extracting audio from concert DVDs, working with microphones and mixers, and more. Kirk also covers the basics of editing recordings in Rogue Amoeba's Fission audio editor.

I could go on for a while about all the good stuff that Kirk distilled into the 119-page book, but if you've read this far and want more detail, click over to the book's full description on the redesigned Take Control Web site.

Finally, I just wanted to share that I had such a nice time making "Take Control of Audio Hijack." In addition to getting to work with Kirk, whose enjoyment of audio is infectious, it was great to have expert editing help from our friend Geoff Duncan, who has many years of experience as a producer, technician, and studio musician. And Rogue Amoeba's Paul Kafasis provided amiable and helpful suggestions during our tech edit phase, making an already good book even better. But the real win was learning Audio Hijack and Fission, which are the epitome of cheerful, uncluttered apps with surprising depths. Using them improves my mood, which is true of too few apps these days. If you need to work with audio, give them a try.

Audio Hijack 3.2 -- Rogue Amoeba has issued Audio Hijack 3.2 with refinements to the Time Shift Block that make it easier to use Audio Hijack for transcribing audio. Time Shift gets a new popover with controls for 3-, 10-, and 30-second jumps as well as a long slider for easy movement around the buffer. You can tear off the popover for better access, as well as pin it so it floats above other windows for access from within other applications. The popular audio recording utility also adds the Sync Block for adding precise delays to audio, adds the Peak/RMS Meters Block for a fully calibrated visualization of your audio, updates the Instant On component to version 8.1 (with initial support for OS X 10.11 El Capitan), supports tags in FLAC files, and ensures correct audio playback of FLAC files in the Recordings tab. Learn all the secrets about Audio Hijack with Kirk McElhearn's new "Take Control of Audio Hijack," which covers common scenarios (such as recording audio playing in Safari), how to digitize old LPs, and even using Audio Hijack to enhance audio from streaming services like Netflix. ($49 new with a 20 percent discount for TidBITS members, free update, 15.4 MB, release notes, 10.9+)

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