

The meeting on Monday 12th December 2016 will be 6.30 for a prompt start at 7pm the St. John Balcome

(formerly The Hobgoblin, nee The Wood)  
21 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6HE

This month on December 12, we will host our annual Christmas party. Open to members only (you can join on this night) we will have our excellent quiz night with great prizes for the winning (and worst) teams and of course our delicious free buffet meal. Make a date in your diary for this great members-only event this month.



## STOP PRESS

LMUG is conducting a members-only blind auction for its venerable Apple MacBook Air. It is the 11-inch late-2010 Model, running macOS Sierra with 4GB of Ram and 64GB storage. In great condition with a carry case and DVI dongle for external monitors, bidding starts at £250. Check your inbox for a special email from our Chairman with the details on how to bid.



Sir John Balcome 21 Balcombe Street NW1 6HE

## Members Only Special Offers

As a member of an official Apple User group, you can take advantage of huge discounts from Apple Developers and service providers. The details on how to claim these special offers, available only to members, can be found in the Soundbyte email that delivered this newsletters.

- Special Offer – Eltima Software Multimedia products: 20% Discount
- Special Offer – Nisus Writer Pro: 25% Discount
- Special Offer – EverWeb by RAGE Software: 50% Discount
- Special Offer – Take Control Books: 30% Discount on all eBooks
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- Special Offer – Joe On Tech Guides: 20% Discount on All Books
- Special Offer – AgileBits 1 Password 5 and more: 25% Discount
- Special Offer – From the makers of TechTool Pro: 20% Discount
- Special Offer – Noteboom Tutorials: 33% Off Annual Memberships
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### Help LMUG when you buy from Amazon!

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## How to Turn Off Sierra's Optimized Storage

When first introducing macOS 10.12 Sierra, Apple made much of Optimized Storage, a marketing term that encompasses various settings and cloud-related technologies for moving data from a Mac's space-constrained local drive to the cloud. In "Explaining Sierra's Optimized Storage" (19 September 2016), I tried to lay out what Optimized Storage covers, explain the Storage Management window interface, and give suggestions about what you should or should not enable manually. Since Optimized Storage deletes data from your local drive such that it may not exist in your backups, you should be aware of the implications of turning it on.

Unfortunately, because Sierra prompts you to enable Desktop and Documents folder syncing during installation and may enable the associated Optimize Mac Storage checkbox by default as well, many Mac users are unwittingly enrolling important data in Optimized Storage. Worse, reports have started circulating that Sierra may have enabled some previously disabled Optimized Storage features during the 10.12.1 update. That's not OK.

For the record, I don't believe that Optimized Storage is inherently evil. Some of its options, such as deleting the local copies of watched movies and TV shows purchased from the iTunes Store, have few downsides. However, many people wish to maintain complete control over local storage, so I'll explain how to disable all of Optimized Storage's options in this article.

iCloud Drive & Desktop and Documents Folder Syncing — Technically speaking, Desktop and Documents folder syncing isn't part of Optimized Storage. Its goal is to store your documents in iCloud Drive so you can access them from any of your Apple devices.

However, Optimized Storage can apply to all iCloud Drive-based documents and data, including the Desktop and Documents folders if they're being synced through iCloud. If Optimized Storage does decide to start deleting local files to free up space, those files are most likely to come from your Documents folder. To keep your Desktop and Documents folders out of iCloud, and to ensure that data that is in iCloud is always mirrored locally, open System Preferences > iCloud > iCloud Drive > Options, and deselect both Desktop & Documents Folders at the top of the list and the Optimize Mac Storage checkbox at the bottom.

Be aware that turning off Desktop and Documents folder syncing is stressful. When you do so, in System Preferences > iCloud > iCloud Drive > Options, Sierra tells you that all your files will be available only in iCloud, which seems wrong: if you're turning off syncing, you're doing so because you want them locally. However, that dialog is followed immediately by another that tells you that you can recover your files from iCloud Drive.

In fact, what happens when you turn off that feature is that Sierra recreates empty Desktop and Documents folders in your home folder. You can't replace those folders, so it's not possible to drag the old Desktop and Documents folders from iCloud Drive to your home folder. Instead, you must open each folder in iCloud Drive and move (Command-drag) its contents to the new local Desktop and Documents folders in your home folder. You can try to delete the now-empty Desktop and Documents folders from iCloud Drive, but in my experience, iCloud keeps recreating at least the Desktop folder.

Photos—Given the ease of taking and storing photos and videos, your Photos library may occupy more space than anything else — I'm not a prolific photographer and mine is still over 110 GB. If you have multiple Apple devices, using iCloud Photo Library lets you access, edit, and manage your photos from any device, which is great, even if it almost always requires that you pay for additional iCloud Drive space.

iCloud Photo Library was one of the first places where Apple dipped its toes into optimizing storage because many Photos libraries are far too large to fit on iOS devices. Plus, it's not uncommon for someone to have an iMac at home but want to play with photos on a space-constrained MacBook Air while on vacation.

My recommendation is to keep Optimized Storage enabled for all iOS devices and secondary Mac notebooks where space is at a premium, but to turn it off on your main Mac so your photos are always included in your backups. To do this, open Photos > Preferences > iCloud, and select "Download

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## iCloud Desktop: A synchronised workplace on all your computers

Apple's new iCloud Desktop is a feature of MacOS Sierra that most of us are just beginning to get to grips with. It's a very useful addition to improve peace of mind and data security.

First, some background. It is generally a bad thing to keep large amounts of data on a Mac Desktop because it can slow down the machine, particularly on startup. It's also unnecessary because a desktop alias leading back to a folder elsewhere on the computer is by far the most efficient way of keeping tabs on things. I tend to keep a number of alias folders on the desktop, including a link to Dropbox, my current photo projects, my inbox for scanned documents and a few other folders I refer to frequently.

*"It is generally a bad thing to keep large amounts of data on a Mac Desktop because it can slow down the machine, particularly on startup."*

They are all empty shells, taking up virtually no resources but allowing direct access to the data elsewhere on the computer.

### Clutter

A snap of a small portion of the desktop on my office iMac. Alias folders, with the bottom left corner arrow refer to actual folders on the drive. Photographs, screen shots and other reference material are temporary but often needed for work in progress when travelling. The mounted drives (yellow) are represent backups and photo libraries.

A snap of a small portion of the desktop on my office iMac. Alias folders, with the bottom left corner arrow refer to actual folders on the drive. Photographs, screen shots and other reference material are temporary but often needed for work in progress when travelling. The mounted drives (yellow) are represent backups and photo libraries.

But it isn't always so easy to keep the Desktop uncluttered. It's the temporary stuff that causes the problems. Quick downloads, a weblink that I'm using for guidance on writing an article, a couple of recent photos. All will be filed away

or destroyed soon but, mostly, this is reference material I am going to use in the near future.

Often, too, it is material that I need to take with me when travelling and I suddenly find it is missing when I open my MacBook in some faraway hotel.

Apple's new iCloud Desktop, which arrived with Sierra, is one way of tackling this problem. Initially I was a bit wary of storing all my desktop folders in the cloud. I worried about my alias folders in particular — would they lead to duplications and broken links if I synced both my desk-bound iMac and my portable MacBook to the iCloud Desktop?

Initially, therefore, shortly after downloading Sierra, I set up iCloud desktop only on the iMac, rather than on both computers, so I could check it out and see if any snags arose. Surprisingly, have found that it works well. I checked to make sure that alias folders are excluded from synchronisation and was pleased to find that (following logic) this is so. Only actual folders on the desktop (and any other separate files) are synchronised with iCloud Desktop while (again logically) attached drive icons are also ignored as you would expect.

### Seamless

After a few days of seamless synchronisation with the iMac I decided to link the portable MacBook with iCloud Desktop. Almost instantaneously, all the temporary folder and files sitting on the iMac desktop appeared on the portable. For anyone running two or more computers this is a big step forward. And even if you have just the one Mac, backing up to iCloud does make sense. You can access them remotely via iCloud.com if you suddenly remember you'd put that vital file or photo on your office or home machine's desktop.

After I linked both computers, items unique to the MacBook were moved into a separate "Desktop" folder on the iMac. While the contents included copies of the MacBook's alias folders, this is simply an aide memoire and a safety net to avoid loss. It did include one pdf file which had been sitting on the MacBook Desktop and which worryingly disappeared. But I needn't have worried because it was filed away in this new folder and I was able to retrieve it.

Increasingly, we are able to rely on keeping

*continued on page 4*

All the articles on this page come from Michael Evans [www.macfilos.com](http://www.macfilos.com). These and many others are well worth reading.

**SoundByte is the newsletter of the London Mac User Group.**

**It is produced solely by, and for, LMUG members.**

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Continued from page 3

the data on two or more Macs fully synchronised. This makes managing multiple computers so much easier than it used to be. The Desktop feature is another important step forward.

I keep very little unique data on my two Mac's internal drives. Apple's iCloud competently looks after contacts, calendars, bookmarks, machine settings and system passwords. iCloud also syncs data from Apple's own apps such as Pages and Numbers as well as that from a number of third-party applications.

#### **Cloud data**

But most of my data (with the exception of my photo library for which I use external disks with a strong backup strategy) lies in Dropbox, a system that I have always found reliable, fast and thoroughly competent. As I mentioned earlier, the Dropbox folder sits in each user's main folder and is fully synchronised. On both machines I have a desktop alias folder for the complete Dropbox contents. I also use several other folders linked from Dropbox for specific tasks. Again, it's worth emphasising that these alias folders are rightly ignored by iCloud Desktop.

With 99 percent of data synchronised with cloud servers and distributed to a second or third Mac, there is now less reliance on local backup. But I am a belt-and-braces kind of chap and am one of those people who believe you can never have enough backups. So I use TimeMachine (although I have never had occasion to restore from it) and at least two separate local backups controlled by Carbon Copy Cloner. I have no real need for an off-site back up of all this routine stuff.

I do, however, maintain an off-site backup (which is updated weekly) for my extensive photo library. An alias folder on the desktop is an empty shell leading to a data folder elsewhere on the computer. An alias folder on the desktop is an empty shell

leading to a data folder elsewhere on the computer

*“Dropbox, a system that I have always found reliable, fast and thoroughly competent.”*

If you do decide to use the new iCloud Desktop bear in mind my initial comments about overburdening your desktop with too much data. By all means add folders (and preferably aliases based on Dropbox or discrete information on your computer) but don't add large folders which will take up storage space on the desktop and slow down your computer.

Here is how to create a desktop alias of a folder on your internal drive. It's all a matter of balance and I reserve the desktop for temporary stuff which I sort into appropriate folders as soon as possible. But with synchronisation, these temporary items are available also on your other Mac when you are away from your desk.

#### **Optimise storage**

Finally, be careful with the “Optimise Mac Storage” option in iCloud settings. By default, all iCloud files will be stored on your local hard disk and this could completely fill your disk when you least expect it. Using the “Optimise Mac Storage” option will address this problem by randomly deleting data from your Mac. Read this salutary tale from Ben Lovejoy at 9to5 Mac before thinking of turning on storage optimisation.