

CAMP NEWS - MAY 2006

The next meeting of the Capital Apple Macintosh Performa User Group will be held on Wednesday, May 10th, 2006, at 7:00 p.m. in Room 117 at Gardiner Area High School. Jeff will demonstrate various aspects of iWeb. The usual Q+A and raffle will also occur. Directors will meet at 6:15. All are welcome to attend.

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iWeb

Part of iLife '06

Apple Computer

Approximately \$70 street price, \$90 family pack, or free with a new Mac

Reviewed by Jeffrey Frankel, CAMP Secretary

iWeb is the latest entrant into the field of web page authoring tools. As part of the iLife suite, iWeb marshals the capabilities of stablemates iPhoto, iTunes, iMovie and GarageBand to add content to your web pages. (I'm not sure if iWeb and iDVD interact).

The core of iWeb is twelve site templates. The template name

frequently suggests the mood that the designers sought to capture: White, Black, Watercolor, Travel, Baby, Kid's Blue, Kid's Pink, Modern, Night Life, Freestyle, Road Trip and Formal. Each site template contains six individual page templates: Welcome, About Me, Photos, Movie, Blog and Podcast.

The templates are fully tricked-out web pages, complete with photos and text. Many also feature page backgrounds and eye-catching design elements. The immediate task at hand is to replace the stock items with your own content. The result is an attractive web site completed in a very small fraction of the time it would have taken you to design one yourself from scratch.

You could stop at this point, but that would be like using a Porsche to deliver newspapers. The siren song of iWeb is “pl-a-a-y with me.” That is, alter the structural components of the template pages to create new pages of one's own fancy. All of the photo placeholders can be relocated, resized, rotated or deleted — or you can add additional photos. Ditto for textboxes...with a difference. The template pages generally have at least one textbox or photo grouping that can be resized, but not deleted. The text you put in these special boxes has one amazing property, which I'll get to momentarily.

You enter text, photos, audio files, movies, etc. primarily through a collection of “inspectors,” i.e. tabbed floating palettes that offer object-specific configuration options. For example, the Page inspector lets you designate page dimensions. You can also specify a background image or background color, and choose how you want the image or background displayed. The Graphics inspector lets you assign a fill, stroke or drop shadow to an object. With respect to drop shadows, you can control the color, angle, offset,

blur and opacity of the shadow. The Text inspector offers full controls for paragraph and alignment attributes. Clicking the Fonts tool opens the Font Book application right within iWeb. Clicking the Colors tool opens a Colors palette that lets you save custom swatches for later use.

The most innovative of these palettes is the Media Browser, which portals into your existing iPhoto library and albums, iTunes library and playlists, and iMovie movies. To add a photo, audio file or movie to your site, simply locate it with the browser and drag the file icon onto your page. You can also insert photos, audio and video via a standard dialog box. The files need not be in your iPhoto or iTunes libraries or have been created with iMovie to be recognized.

The effect of the inspectors, palettes and media browser is that iWeb functions much more like a hybrid page layout and image editing program than a web page creation program — and that's a good thing. The drop shadow controls and color palette remind me very much of Adobe Photoshop. The text controls are what I'm accustomed to from PageMaker and inDesign.

In addition, the iWeb main window is its own live preview. You can toggle object boundaries on and off if you like, but other than that, there is no separate “design mode” and “preview mode.” The iWeb window is a full-time preview of what your page in progress will look like in a web browser. iWeb makes it a snap to upload your page to .Mac or to a file location on your hard drive. You can also upload to web servers other than .Mac, although I didn't attempt this.

I referred earlier to an amazing property of some of the template textboxes. What these do is automatically convert stylized headline

text into a graphic, thus eliminating one of the biggest headaches in web page design. The headache is that a web browser can only render text in the typefaces that are installed on that individual machine. So although the web *designer* has set the page title in Super Grungo Al Fresco, odds are that none of the computers reading the web page will have this font installed, and the page title will display instead in plain ol' Arial or Times New Roman. To get around this obstacle, web designers generate fancy type as graphic files in Photoshop or Illustrator — complete with drop shadows, glows, gradient fills and all kinds of other special effects. iWeb scores a real coup in doing this automatically all by itself. You can use the artsiest (or grungiest) typeface in your font folders in iWeb's magic text boxes, apply text effects directly in the Text Inspector, and your text will display as you designed it on every computer that visits your site.

iWeb is elegant and moderately intuitive, but does take some practice to feel comfortable with. A PDF Getting Started guide is available from the Help menu. Help itself is pretty good, but the best help resource out there is the iWeb discussions board on Apple's support site. Another promising option is an about-to-be published TidBits ebook, Take Control of iWeb. The ("Take Control" series has been excellent.)

iWeb does, of course, have its share of annoyances. For starters, there is absolutely no integration between iWeb and Apple's predecessor web creation tool, HomePage. Pages created with HomePage cannot be opened by or converted to iWeb. Short of manually re-creating the legacy sites in iWeb, the only remedy is to cross-link between the two families of web sites.

I also ran into a situation where iWeb was of its own volition

turning the background of one page green when publishing the site to .Mac or a hard drive. I was able to solve this problem by opening the page in GoLive and removing the background color attribute from the body tag. But I was lucky. My knowledge of HTML is limited, and anything more arcane I wouldn't have been able to figure out.

Twelve site templates sounds like a lot, but a broader selection of general-purpose templates is needed to enable a broader range of web pages. (Many of the themed background images cannot be easily removed from the template pages.) Some third-party templates are available, but Apple really needs to expand the range of in-house offerings.

Finally, don't expect too much from iWeb. Its purpose is personal web sites. You won't find any templates oriented towards businesses or organizations. Don't look for javascript actions, forms or database capabilities, either.

But if you want to share a special event or travel experience; post a wedding album; let the world know what's up with you or your family; or put up a blog or a podcast, iWeb may be just the ticket. That's the "life" in iLife. iWeb is totally different than anything that came before it, and is a worthy addition to the iLife suite.

Apple may embrace file-sharing - Rumor has it that file-swapping tech could speed iTunes movie downloads on Macs.

SAN FRANCISCO (Business 2.0 Magazine) - Since 1999, Apple has been a

<http://boston.internet.com/news/article.php/2198031>

]loyal customer of

Akamai, the Cambridge, Mass.-based technology outfit whose content-delivery services speeds Apple's software and music downloads. As

[<http://money.cnn.com/quote/quote.html?symb=AAPL>

]Apple ([

<http://cnfn.investor.reuters.com/Reports.aspx?ticker=AAPL>]Research)

preps an online movie store, however, it's looking at even heftier bandwidth bills. So [

<http://macosrumors.com/20060429A.php>]rumor has

it that it's looking at putting file-sharing technology into an upcoming version of its Mac OS X operating system. If Mac OS Rumors' report pans out, Apple would have Mac users download files from other Macs rather than from Apple's servers, saving Apple money. To encourage users to participate, the proposed scheme could reward them with credit towards iTunes purchases.

Apple wins iTunes pricing battle

NEW YORK (CNNMoney.com) - Apple Computer said that it has renewed contracts with the four largest record companies, ensuring that songs will still be sold at 99 cents each, according to a news report Tuesday. The record companies had been pushing Apple to allow different pricing for tracks, especially the ability to charge higher prices for new material from top-selling

artists, said the Financial Times.

The companies - Universal, [
<http://money.cnn.com/quote/quote.html?symb=WMG>
]Warner Music ([
<http://cnfn.investor.reuters.com/Reports.aspx?ticker=WMG>
]Research), EMI and Sony BMG - were forced to accept Apple CEO Steve Jobs' pricing because the iTunes music store has so much influence over the U.S. download market, the report said. The iTunes music store accounts for 80 percent of paid downloads. The newspaper says that some labels were considering signing short-term contracts with Apple now and then bringing up the issue again in the near future. Online music sales increased 194 percent last year to 352 million units, according to the report.

Viruses catch up to the Mac
Experts debate just how susceptible Apple is becoming

SAN FRANCISCO, California (AP) -- Benjamin Daines was browsing the Web when he clicked on a series of links that promised pictures of an unreleased update to his computer's operating system. Instead, a window opened on the screen and strange commands ran as if the machine was under the control of someone -- or something -- else. Daines was the victim of a computer virus. Such headaches are hardly unusual on PCs running Microsoft Corp.'s Windows operating system. Daines,

however, was using a Mac -- an Apple Computer Inc. machine often touted as being immune to such risks.

He and at least one other person who clicked on the links were infected by what security experts call the first virus for Mac OS X, the operating system that has shipped with every Mac sold since 2001 and has survived virtually unscathed from the onslaught of malware unleashed on the Internet in recent years. "It just shows people that no matter what kind of computer you use you are still open to some level of attack," said Daines, a 29-year-old British chemical engineer who once considered Macs invulnerable to such attacks.

Apple's iconic status, growing market share and adoption of the same microprocessors used in machines running Windows are making Macs a bigger target, some experts warn.

Apple's most recent wake-up call came last week, as a Southern California researcher reported seven new vulnerabilities. Tom Ferris said malicious Web sites can exploit the holes without a user's knowledge, potentially allowing a criminal to execute code remotely and gain access to passwords and other sensitive information.

Ferris said he warned Apple of the vulnerabilities in

January and February and that the company has yet to patch the holes, prompting him to compare the Cupertino-based computer maker to Microsoft three years ago, when the world's largest software company was criticized for being slow to respond to weaknesses in its products.

"They didn't know how to deal with security, and I think Apple is in the same situation now," said Ferris, himself a Mac user.

Apple officials point to the company's virtually unvarnished security track record and disputed claims that Mac OS X is more susceptible to attack now than in the past.

Apple plans to patch the holes reported by Ferris in the next automatic update of Mac OS X, and there have been no reports of them being exploited, spokeswoman Natalie Kerris said. She disagreed that the vulnerabilities make it possible for a criminal to run code on a targeted machine.

In Daines' infection, a bug in the virus' code prevented it from doing much damage. Still, several of his operating system files were deleted, several new files were created and several applications, including a program for recording audio, were crippled.

Behind the scenes, the virus also managed to hijack his instant messaging program, so the rogue file was blasted to 10 people on his buddy list.

"A lot of Mac users are in denial and have blinders on that say, 'Nothing is ever going to get to us,'" said Neil Fryer, a computer security consultant who works for an international financial institution in Britain. "I can't say I agree with them."

Fryer, also a Mac user, said he has begun taking additional precautions over the past year to make sure he doesn't fall victim to an attack. He spends more time than in the past scrutinizing his security logs for signs of intruders, and he uses a firewall and additional security applications, just as he would with a Windows-based machine.

Among the other signs Macs are a growing target:

The SANS Institute, a computer-security organization in Bethesda, Maryland, added Mac OS X to its 2005 list of the top-20 Internet vulnerabilities. It was the first time the Mac has been included since the experts started compiling the list in 2000.

This week, SANS updated the list to warn against flaws in Safari, the Mac Web browser, which the group said criminals were able to attack before Apple could fix.

The number of discovered Mac vulnerabilities has grown in recent years, with 81 found last year, up from 46 in 2004 and 27 in 2003, according to the Open Source Vulnerability Database, which is maintained by a nonprofit group that tracks security vulnerabilities on many different hardware and software platforms.

Less than a week after Daines was attacked in mid-February, a 25-year-old computer security researcher released three benign Mac-based worms to prove a serious vulnerability in Mac OS X could be exploited. Apple asked the man, Kevin Finisterre, to hold off publishing the code until it could patch the flaw.

The Mac's vulnerability could also increase as Apple transitions to a product line that uses microprocessors made by Intel Corp., security experts said.

With new Macs running the same processor that powers Windows-based machines, far more people will know how to exploit weaknesses in Apple machines than in the past, when they ran on the PowerPC chips made by IBM Corp. and Motorola Corp. spinoff Freescale Semiconductor Inc.

"They have eliminated their genetic diversity," said independent security consultant Rodney Thayer. "The fear is that we're going to run into a new class of

attacks."

Bud Tribble, Apple's senior vice president of software technology, disagreed.

"All the things we've been doing to make Mac OS X secure continue to be relevant on Intel," he said.

Mac OS X, he said, is designed to be Internet-safe out of the box, without the need for firewalls or additional security software. He praised Mac OS X for making it easy for users to automatically install security patches.

He noted that the operating system was derived from FreeBSD, open source software that was built from the ground up to provide security for computers networked together. Since its origins in the early 1990s, the Unix-based FreeBSD has continually been battle-tested by college students and computer security specialists.

"The bottom line is we still feel more comfortable using a Mac than a (Windows) PC," said Alan Paller, director of research for SANS.

But as Daines can attest, there are no guarantees.

"We're all sort of waiting with bated breath to see if any problem will happen and the jury is still out," said Thayer, the independent security consultant. "I don't

think you'll find a consensus."

Steve, here's a membership plea for the next newsletter. Mike's address is WRONG.

Mike, can you let Steve know what your correct address is. Also it wouldn't hurt to e-mail CAMP members prior to (and after) the May meeting. As I recall, Steve Katz, Jeff, Adam and I have already renewed.

Time to Renew Your CAMP Membership

Unless you've already renewed, your CAMP membership expired in April. Annual dues remain \$20 per year for the period running May 1, 2006 to April 30, 2007. We hope you agree that your CAMP membership gives you good value and that you'll be renewing your membership. As a special inducement for CAMP's membership drive, a number of members have agreed to give other members special discounts:

1. Bluemoon Macintosh Resources, 751 High Street, West Gardiner (582-5240, bluemoonmac@midmaine.com). Adam Tomash, CAMP President and frequent presenter at

meetings, will give members a 10% discount on service labor and 10% off used Apple computers.

2. Common Sense Computing, 1513 Main Street, Readfield (685-4510, westlake@gwi.net). Sue Westlake, a long-time CAMP member and Mac trainer, offers renewing members a 10% discount on private lessons.

3. RE-BOOKS, 25 East Concourse, Waterville (877-2484, re.books@verizon.net). Robert Sezak, another CAMP member and proprietor of RE-BOOKS, offers members a 10% discount on used books, when he is in the store. In addition to a great selection of books, Robert often has some vintage Macs for sale.

We hope you'll agree that CAMP offers exceptional value for your money. And, with these discounts in place, it won't take you long to recover the cost of your membership. You can send a check (payable to CAMP) to Michael Knight, Membership Director, R5, Box 560A, Gardiner, ME 04345 or bring \$20 with you to our next meeting.

FeedForAll Mac is software that allows you to easily make, publish and edit RSS feeds, podcasts or iTunes for Mac OS X 10.3.9 or better. **NotePage, Inc.** has given us a free copy of **FeedForAll Mac** to raffle off as a door prize at our next meeting.

FeedForAll Mac can be used to create and maintain an unlimited number of RSS feeds and podcasts, enabling users to flawlessly maintain and distribute multiple content streams simultaneously.

FeedForAll Mac has built-in support for new RSS standards, like the Apple iTunes RSS extension. Other extensions like those from Yahoo and Microsoft are also supported.

thanks again to those who contribute to the newsletter / sk