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Workflow secrets on the Apple OSX desktop

After working on computers for as many years as I have, you learn a few things. This month I'm going to share some of my tricks with you.

There are ways to set up your networking so it's just easier to use.

Let's start with file sharing. Mac's OSX10.4x has made it easier to share files so let's focus on older operating systems.

If you want to grab someone else's desktop, first go to their **Hard Drive> User Folder> User Name Folder> Desktop Folder**. Once you navigate there, drag the desktop folder into the sidebar in your finder window. This creates a short cut that can easily be removed if the path to the folder changes.

When you need to access it again, just click the icon to bring up their hard drive.

computernotes
from the road

by WILMA MELOT

Open that finder in the first level of your finder window. The beauty of this is that when you go to the open command in an OSX program your side bar is still there and you can call up the folder with one touch.

If the path changes, just drag the icon off, watch it go 'Poof!' and make a new one. You'll need to create a new path if you rename your hard drive or change your user name but once you understand this idea you'll wonder why it took you so long to start using it.

If you're fishing through more than three levels of folders, I recommend trying this. You can do the same thing in Windows' Vista by dragging the folder from the navigation pane to the favorites links section to make a shortcut.
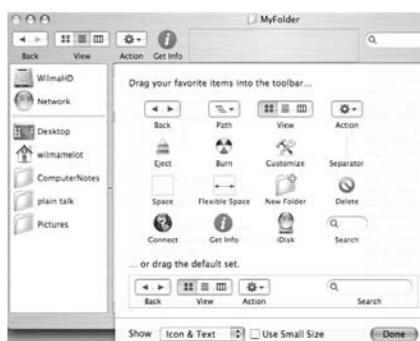
You can also make your life easier by selecting your default printer in the system preferences. Now when you call up your favorite program it automatically selects the printer you use most often as well as the correct printer description file.

This can save a lot of time if you print to more than one tray in your printer. Some printers will not print to the right tray if you don't have the proper printer description file chosen.

For those of you with Mac OSX10.4, sharing is a whole lot easier thanks to "recent servers" – one of my favorite menu items.

Once you share to someone just go to the Apple menu and re-select that server. It's that easy.

Those of you who are new to OSX will find the finder window easy to understand. Look closely at the icons to the right. You already know about forward and back buttons

from your Web browser. Next is the view button, which allows you to switch back and forth between Icon, List View (used for finding things by name, date or kind within a folder), and Column View (used for finding info on individual items). Column view is most useful for viewing photos.

Just click on a photo and column view shows you a thumbnail of the picture making it easy to choose photos from you cameras.

If you control click the finder window and go to "Customize Toolbar," you will be able to set the preferences for what runs across the top of your finder window. Even veteran users might find this tip useful; it's hardly ever used.

I've seen many machines that have lost their icons for the hard drive or network globe in the sidebar. Want to know how to find it? Go to **Finder> Preferences> Sidebar** and then check the box next to the Hard Drive until you get a real check mark.

Keeping this type of item in your sidebar can save you time when you're looking for files on your drive.

Try taking control of what your machine is displaying to you each day and you can find many ways to speed up your operation.

Using DVDs for hard drive backup storage

If you're going to be backing up photos, you need a DVD burner and external ones are coming down in price

If you're thinking about buying a new computer, you can get one with a DVD burner and a DVD holds a whole lot of photos.

Look for 4X DVD+RW media, which can reliably be rewritten up to 1,000 times and can store up to 4.7 GB of data. You can back up a 20GB hard drive with just five of these.

With larger storage capacities on DVD media, users can store at least 6.5 times more than on a CD-R/RW.

Naturally you're going to need a DVD+RW/+R drive to use these, but they're quickly replacing CD WR drives because of

their storage capacity. Most DVD WR drives also read and write CD's.

My research shows that it's best to have a machine with a burner in it. It's faster and the software is already installed on your drive.

If you're ordering a new computer be sure to see if a super drive pre-installed is within your budget range.

The fastest external DVDs are firewire or IEEE 1394 drives. Most come with USB, if that's all your computer supports.

The LaCie d2 LightScribe 16x DL DVD+/-RW Drive, External, FireWire drive lets you burn a label into your disk as well as burn info onto the media all for about $190 (for Macs).

Iomega 52x24x52 CD-RW / 16x DVD Combo Drive, External, USB 2.0 isn't as fast

since it uses USB but it's only $78 and is Mac and Windows compatible. Adobe Photoshop Album Starter Edition software comes with this drive and helps you instantly organize and find your digital photos. You'll be able to find your photos by date or keyword tags, no matter where they are stored on your computer.

Sony Multi-Format DL DVD+/-RW Drive, External, USB 2.0 / FireWire is faster since it uses FireWire. The Sony DVD comes with Toast for Macintosh and Nero for Windows and retails for $80.

Disks for these drives are fairly expensive – about $1 for the RW DVDs and 50-cents for one-time R DVDs. If it's true that you can overwrite the RW DVDs 1,000 times, it's not such a bad deal.

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plugged IN

Yahoo! Web mail woes

I've heard that many of you are having problems with Yahoo Web mail renaming your downloads "Securedownload."

Don't feel alone if you're one of them. Web discussions are full of unhappy customers. Apparently there's not a fix at this time. Apple says it's a Yahoo problem and Yahoo says it's an Apple problem.

That means it may be a few months before either one of them fix the problem.

In the meantime, download the Firefox Web browser. It works fine with Yahoo Web mail and it's always good to have more than one Web browser in your arsenal.

Netscape 7.0 doesn't have a foolproof method but it does appear to have a workaround. It lets you name the file before you download it so you can manually give it the right name. Neither Netscape 9.0 or Opera work; same for Safari.

It looks like a Yahoo problem to me since so many other browsers are having problems interpreting their mail.

Our old version of Outlook seems to be having the same trouble on OS9 so you may need to look at going to OSX and Firefox for the answer.

To download the Firefox Web browser go to www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/.

Open source word processor

If you're looking for a simple word processor to open Word documents and just don't want to deal with Neooffice, give Abiword a try.

Abiword is simple to install and looks a great deal like an older version of Word.

It's simple to use and works well. The program has word count for those of you who need something to count words in your legals. It also offers style sheets, although they seem to only apply to the original document. You could create a blank document to use as a template file for styles.

Abiword 2.4.5 opens and saves Microsoft Word documents and lets you work with these files if someone sends them to you over the Internet.

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Of course, they're not going to turn down a donation if you choose to give one when you download the program, which is available at www.abiword.com.