



## Experience the flexibility of a laptop computer

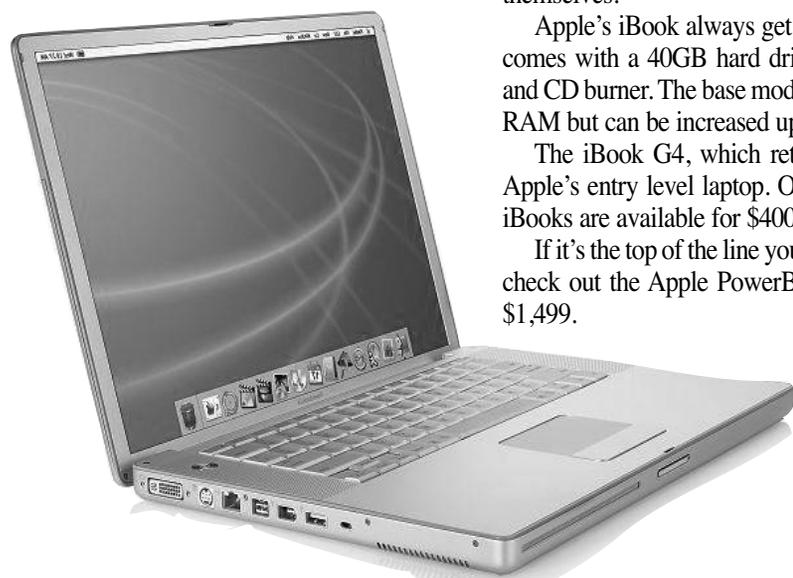
Many publishers have adopted what I call the laptop way of working. Instead of being chained to a desk, they're free to take notes at meetings and football games as well as work on budgets in the privacy of their own homes.

Before you start telling me that you can't afford another computer, consider what your time is worth and think about not having to run to the office to use the computer. Sounds nice, doesn't it?

If cost is a factor, consider a less expensive PC or Mac laptop. Just bypass networking issues and use a jump drive to transfer files. All the jump drive requires is a USB port.

Do plan to install a good word processing program that spell checks and allows you to save files in a plain text format. Microsoft Word is a good choice.

While you can probably get on-line with an inexpensive laptop, you're probably not going to be able to run a page layout program.



by WILMA MELOT

computer notes  
from the road

If that's your goal, buy a high-end machine.

But here's a perk. According to Adobe, you can put a copy of your licensed software on both your work machine and your laptop.

But let's let the laptops speak for themselves.

Apple's iBook always get good reviews. It comes with a 40GB hard drive, DVD reader and CD burner. The base model has 512MB of RAM but can be increased up to 1.5GB.

The iBook G4, which retails for \$999, is Apple's entry level laptop. Older, refurbished iBooks are available for \$400 and up.

If it's the top of the line you're interested in, check out the Apple PowerBooks, starting at \$1,499.

What about those inexpensive PC laptops you hear about? It's true, they're out there. Let's look at some of the different brands.

Dell's lowest end laptop retails for about \$500. Acer sells the Aspire 3003LCI for around \$600. The Aspire has a 40GB hard drive but only comes with 256MB of RAM.

This machine also has USB, Ethernet and a CD burner.

The HP (Hewlett-Packard) Pavilion zv6130us Notebook \$890.00. This one has the starting point of 512MB of RAM, 80GB hard drive, USB and Ethernet.

There will probably be some great deals at the stores before Christmas and a mad rush to grab those specials. Before you become part of the pack, check it out. How well is it built? Does it have built-in shock resistance technology? Is it able to run the software you're planning to put on it? (That's mostly answered by how much RAM it has. As a rule of thumb, 512MB is a starting point.)

Although most machines come with USB ports now, make sure the machine you're looking at has this, especially if you're going to use a jump drive to transfer files.

It also doesn't hurt to look for brand names that have been around for awhile. As you learn more about computers, you can branch out.

Don't forget to read on-line reviews before you buy.

Now that you can a vague idea of what you're looking for you're ready to start shopping. Have fun and I hope you enjoy seeing what's available.



## Finding Drivers

Bill Morgan at the Hughes County Times in Wetumka asked me to help set up a printer for their labels.

The Epson 890 printer he purchased said it worked with Macs. However, you couldn't find a printer drive anywhere. He could print, but it was all gibberish.

I began searching for the right printer driver. It wasn't on Epson's Web site and it wasn't on Apple's Web site. But I knew there was a driver available because Linda Lord at the Chelsea Reporter has it.

After searching on the Web for hours, I came across great site that has drivers for everything including scanners, printers, card readers and print servers. Well, it may not have "everything" but if you're trying to marry old software to new computers, this is the place to check:

<http://www.driverscollection.com/>

Just type in the name of the printer or other device and see if they have it. I even found that driver for Bill's printer here.

## Changing Utilities

Robin Johnson from the Kingfisher Times & Free Press recently called the Norton support people to ask if there was a utility able to boot her new iMac. Norton told her that there's no new Disk Doctor for the iMac and to go to TechTool Pro 4.0.6 for the Macintosh.

I followed up on Robin's call and folks, it's true. But don't panic. TechTool Pro seems to be a good utility.

There's even a program that lets you upgrade Norton to TechTool Pro 4.0.6 CD Crossgrade for Mac OSX for just \$59.97. To upgrade, go to [www.micromat.com](http://www.micromat.com). You're going to need your serial number and you must own either a SystemWorks or Norton utilities program to upgrade.

It appears that Norton is going to focus solely on the anti-virus software and let other vendors take on the business of repairing your hard drive.

In my opinion, having a utility that is able to boot and work on your system is invaluable. And if you need even more reasons to buy TechTool Pro, consider this: It has the ability to do volume repair and data recovery.

TechTool Pro works on all Mac machines newer than the beige G3s.

## Computers break into media center market

Apple and Microsoft are both trying to create the best home entertainment machine on the planet. Thanks to the advancements, you can now buy a home computer that's able to run your home media center.

For those of us in the newspaper business about to make a new computer purchase, you need to be aware of all the "extras" on these machines.

Since the new G5 iMac came out first, let's go over its bragging rights. Apple's media machine, which comes with a remote control, lets you command music, photos, movies and DVDs from anywhere in your living room. The computer starts at \$1,299.

The new iMac comes with a built-in iSight camera, which allows you to see your children or grandchildren while you chat.

Front Row is the new, intuitive Apple software that lets you play music, movies, photos and DVDs with the Apple Remote six-button control.

Other new software lets you take photos with Photo Booth and the built-in iSight camera.

This machine has a fast PCI-E ATI Radeon X600 Pro or XT graphics card to make images look their best on the widescreen flat-panel display.

But wait, there's more ... you can even mirror video to your TV, display or projector with mini-VGA(2). Pretty cool way to use your big screen TV as a remote monitor.

On the PC side, machines are being sold with the new Window XP Media Center, which has an S-Video port to hook to your TV.

It's important to note that not all PCs running Microsoft Windows XP Media Center Edition 2005 are sold with a TV tuner or remote control.

If your Media Center PC doesn't have these features, you can still add them.

The base model of these computers starts at around \$700. You also need to know what video cards you need and make sure everything's compatible.

These new features allow you to switch back and forth from the TV to the Internet.

It still runs like a Windows XP machine with all your regular software but it's also able

to be your TV set. You can even record your favorite shows to your hard drive and play them back later.

Naturally, it plays DVDs and burns CDs, if your computer has those drives. There's even a remote control available.

You won't even miss iTunes, since this machine is able to live stream Internet radio shows.

Just think of it – you can watch and record your personal line-up of TV shows, view the latest movies, store all your family's photos, create CDs and DVDs – all from the comfort of your couch!

It doesn't even appear to be hard to set up.

Gamers are going to love this computer – just imagine the action and graphics on a big screen TV.

Although this isn't something every newspaper is going to need, it's something to think about when you buy your next computer.