Cut work time down by using shortcuts

computer notes
from the road
by WILMA MELOT

When it comes to working on computers, speed is the name of the game.

Programmers of Adobe and Word software realize the importance of keyboard shortcuts, and have included a slew of them to help us get things done faster.

While using a mouse looks easier with its one (or two) buttons, navigating around menu bars takes up far more time than using a keyboard's many keys.

In this month's installment of 'Computer Notes,' I'm going to pass on some of the most valuable shortcuts.

If you learn a handful of shortcuts, your time spent editing, designing or laying out will decrease.

And if you spend all day on the computer, using shortcuts will make you wonder how you ever worked without them.

So, how do you start to learn keyboard shortcuts?

The best place to start learning (and using) shortcuts is in which ever program you use most often, even if it's your Web browser.

Every time you reach for the mouse to look through a menu, take notice of the keyboard command for that action.

Then, instead of using the mouse, try the keyboard command several times.

If you need, write a few commands on a sticky note and attach it to the margin of your monitor. My experience shows that after using a command only a few times, my brain remembers it.

To find a good list of Internet shortcuts, take a look under the File menu. One shortcut selects the address bar from the keyboard to type in a URL. To do this using a Mac in Firefox or Safari, hold down the Apple key and tap the L key.

Adobe and Microsoft have standard shortcuts to assist with basic functions. The Command key is also known as the Apple key and features a symbol of an apple or clover leaf.

PC and Mac Shortcuts

The following shortcuts work in Adobe InDesign and Microsoft Word. The first shortcut is for PCs and the second is for Macs.

• Copy: Ctrl + C/Apple + C

(You need an item or text selected when using this.)

• Cut: Ctrl + X/ Apple + X

• Paste: Ctrl + V/ Apple V

• Open a new document: Ctrl+O / Apple + O

• Print: Ctrl + P/ Apple + P

• Undo last action: Ctrl + Z/ Apple + Z

• Select the entire document or story: Ctrl + A/ Apple + A

• Find and Replace: Ctrl + F/Apple + F

The 'find' shortcut can be a big time saver if you want to find misspelled words, or if you want to change a certain word and don't want to look over an entire document.

One of the best shortcuts helps you switch between programs you currently have open. On a PC, click Alt + tab. On Mac OSX, click Apple + tab.

Adobe Shortcuts

Adobe programs are loaded with shortcuts. To find shortcuts, simply hold your cursor over an item in a tool bar to show the tool's name along with the shortcut.

The toolbars in Photoshop (left) and in Indesign (right) are filled with shortcuts.

For example, holding your cursor over the hand tool shows the letter H. To select the hand tool, click the H key when you have the selection tool selected. However, when you have the text tool selected and want to use the hand tool, hold down the Option key. Otherwise, you'll type a letter H in your text box.

My favorite shortcut in Photoshop reduces and increases brush size.

With your brush tool selected, simply click the left bracket key to reduce brush size or the right bracket key to increase the size.

This will also increase or decrease the size of various other tools such as healing brush eraser, and blur.

(If you don't know what the bracket keys look like, look for the two keys to the upper left of the return key.)

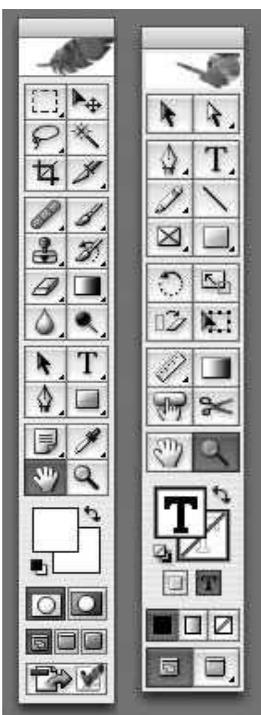Did you know that you can add to a selection in Adobe programs by holding down the shift key?

In Photoshop you can subtract from a selection by holding down the "alt/option" keys.

These can be big time-saving shortcuts in Photoshop when you are using the Magic Wand or Marquee tools.

I recommend experimenting with the shortcuts to see exactly how they work. There are many more shortcuts on top of the ones I shared.

To find out more about shortcuts, click on Help.

In the menu that pops up, click on Search and type 'shortcut.'

What to expect when using Microsoft's new releases

Microsoft has two new releases for the Mac in 2008 – Microsoft Office and Remote Desktop Connection.

Microsoft Office 2008 for Macintosh was released about a month ago. After looking it over, it's much different from previous versions of Office.

Word 2008 looks a lot more like a layout program, with a paste-up board and linked text boxes.

If you plan to use Word 2008 to design your newspaper, expect to encounter some issues when trying to import files and get them to reproduce on a press.

One positive out of Word's new look is that it's easier to navigate due to how the menu bars are presented.

Excel 2008 includes helpful features, like a helper for creating formulas.

PowerPoint has many new cool layouts and templates to work from.

Microsoft Office 2008 requires OSX 10.2.8 or higher, 256MB of RAM, a CD-ROM drive and 700 MHz native PowerPC G3, G4 or G5 processor.

The Internet needs to be accessible and active on the machine where the software is installed.

With Remote Desktop Connection, Microsoft has created a way for Mac users to access PC-only software from your Mac.

Remote Desktop also enables Macs to copy files between a Mac and a Windows-based computer and print from Windows programs to any printer connected to your Mac.

One feature I particularly like is that Remote Desktop allows a Mac to connect to many Windows-based computers at the same time.

This is possible through a universal binary that runs natively on Intel-based Macs and PowerPC-based Macs.

Remote Desktop has the ability to be customized to fit your work habits with changeable keyboard shortcuts or switched to different screen modes.

To find out more about Office 2008 and Remote Desktop Connection, go to:

www.microsoft.com/mac/default.mspx

plugged IN

Recycle old computers

I am often asked what to do with old computers.

Rather than simply throwing them out for your trash man to pick up, consider recycling.

The first thing to do when recycling is to try to remember where you bought the computer. Many manufacturers and dealers recycle their computers. Recycling information can usually be found on manufacturer or dealer Web sites.

Some large dealers will even pay the shipping cost of sending the old computer back to them when you initially buy a computer from them.

For those of you on the east side of the state, Natural Evolution is a Tulsa company that works to get rid of old computer equipment in landfill-free ways. They will take as many computers as you have and don't discriminate when it comes to what kind of technology you're throwing away. Computers, monitors, printers, fax machines, copiers and phone systems are a few of the items that Natural Evolution can take off your hands.

For more information, visit Natural Evolution's Web site at:

www.naturalevolution.com

If you own a Dell and live on the west side of Oklahoma, don't miss the Oklahoma City recycling event sponsored by Dell, the Department of Environmental Quality and Goodwill.

The next Dell event will be held in October 2008. To ship an old Dell back for recycling now, go to:

www.dell4me.com/recycling

To recycle an Apple, the quickest way of finding a method to recycle your Mac is:

www.apple.com/environment/recycling/program/index.html

If you own a Toshiba computer that you wish to recycle, go to:

www.toshiba.com/csrpub/jsp/home/SResponsibility.jsp