printout

Aurora 3D Text & Logo Maker, buying camera cards, and VPN.

Tom Bank will demonstrate Aurora 3D Text & Logo Maker. We have a video on buying camera cards, and Dennis McMahon will demonstrate VPN.

Aurora 3D Text & Logo Maker allows users to compose and arrange strikingly beautiful and impressive 3D Graphics, high quality text and logos.

It provides hundreds of style options, many user-friendly operations such as: reflections, mixing, deformation textures. User can apply various texture effects such as metal, glass, plastic and, while always maintaining impressive 3D effects.

A VPN (Virtual Private Network) is a private network that uses a public network (usually the Internet) to connect remote sites or users together. Normal internet connections are liable to eavesdropping. By using VPN all of your internet communications are encrypted and secured from eavesdropping. Obviously this is "a really good thing" for businesses. It's possible that home users could benefit from setting up a VPN network. ⌘

If the weather looks threatening on February 17th for our meeting, the board will try to make a call on canceling the meeting by noon, and try to update our website and send an email out to members informing them of a cancellation.

Meet us at

Bethany Village Retirement Center
Education Room
5225 Wilson Lane, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

Tuesday, February 17, 2015 6:30 p.m.

Attendance is free and open to all interested persons.

Contents

Keystone MacCentral is a not-for-profit group of Macintosh enthusiasts who generally meet the third Tuesday of every month to exchange information, participate in question-and-answer sessions, view product demonstrations, and obtain resource materials that will help them get the most out of their computer systems. Meetings are free and open to the public. The *Keystone MacCentral printout* is the official newsletter of Keystone MacCentral and an independent publication not affiliated or otherwise associated with or sponsored or sanctioned by any for-profit organization, including Apple Inc. Copyright © 2015, Keystone MacCentral, 310 Somerset Drive, Shiresmanstown, PA 17011.

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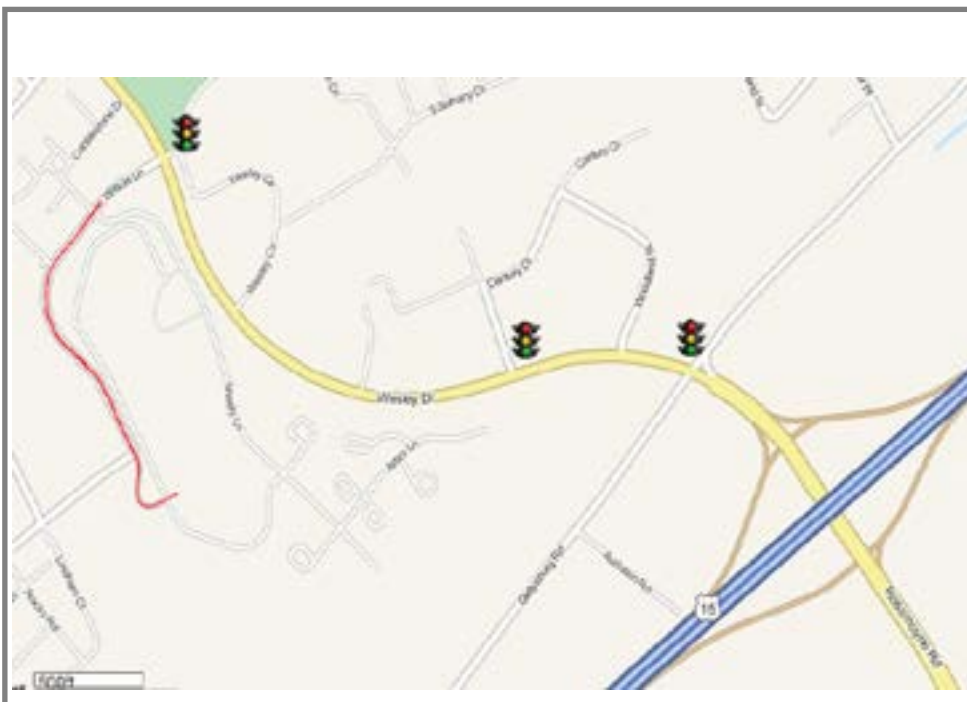
Keystone MacCentral
Minutes
January 20, 2015

Business Meeting

Before we began the meeting, Jim Carey set up his Apple TV to see if it would work in our meeting room at Bethany Village West. We watched a video from CES 2015 in Las Vegas. Eric Adams is working on sending out requests for our annual auction to be held at the April meeting. If you have ideas for vendors we have not contacted before, please let Eric know about them. Tom Bank has been working with a 3D logo program. He will write an article for the newsletter and give a short demonstration of it at the February meeting. Dennis McMahon may have a few more things to demonstrate in February.

If the weather looks threatening on February 17th for our meeting, the board will try to make a call on canceling the meeting by noon, and try to update our website and send an email out to members informing them of a cancellation.

Q&A & Comments

Ernie Levasseur thanked his fellow KeyMac members for keeping the club going. As the author Steven Johnson observed in his book Future Perfect, the collective knowledge of a diverse group like ours will often trump the knowledge of an expert.

We talked about some scams that are circulating, and what to do to avoid falling victim to them. Someone wanted to know how to transfer photos from a broken iPhone. Several adapters were mentioned. There is an app called PhoneView <ecamm.com> that may be of help. Apple operates a repair center in Carlisle but it does not accept walk-ins for service.

Program Notes

Having run low on storage space on his new MacBook, Dennis McMahon noticed some slower performance. The new unibody MacBooks are easier to get into for upgrades so Dennis decided to investigate larger hard drives. There are many videos posted online showing how to swap hard drives. The Macsales site from OWC has some that are helpful and other sites also have them. Dennis provided a cautionary note. You might want to preview the entire video before doing the upgrade in case there is a step that might confuse you.

Dennis uses SuperDuper! to clone hard drives when he needs to but noted that SuperDuper! would not clone the restore partition. Alternately using Carbon Copy Cloner makes the cloned restore partition twice the size it needs to be. Before using either program, you will want to repair permissions. If using SuperDuper!, an app from the silvertooth.us site can help you load the restore partition on the new hard drive. Recovery Partition Creator 3.8 needs to be on the new hard drive to work. Microsoft applications need the serial number of the new hard drive so they can be re-registered.

Hard drive performance depends on both the built-in cache of the drive and its spindle speed. Faster (7200rpm) drives use more battery power and create more heat, so there is a tradeoff to consider when choosing a new drive. Dennis showed us a graph of reliability of drives from a number of manufacturers. There are several benchmark apps for running speed test comparisons. The free Blackmagic Disk Speed Test app provides a graphical interface that might be meaningful to some users. Xbench provides raw numbers which Dennis put into a spreadsheet showing eSATA SD drives outperforming other drive types.

Jim Carey led our discussion of recovering images from a damaged camera card, with video help. The first thing to remember when you discover a problem with a camera card is to immediately stop taking any more pictures to that card.

Some camera manufacturers list their error codes on their web sites, so you might get an idea of the problem. Some error messages might be cleared up by taking the battery out of the camera and then reinserting it. Memory cards can be accidentally locked by bumping the slide switch which would prevent any more writing to that card.

Try running recovery software with the damaged card connected to your Mac to see what photos can be saved. There are a number of recovery programs, including Recuva, SanDisk Rescue PRO, and Image Rescue 4. You might notice some missing metadata from recovered photos and these programs could possibly find more images than you remember having on the card if they have not yet been overwritten by newer images.

by Tom Bank, Sr.

Aurora 3D Text & Logo Maker

This month the KeyMac meeting will include a demonstration of a new program which is designed to help us assemble neat graphics and text designs for business, social organizations, hobbies, or other personal use.

I admit that I have been curious about 3D graphics for some time because I couldn't picture in my mind how what I knew as 3D could be displayed on my computer's monitor screen. I understood 3D in dual still photos or "artwork," such as 19th century cardboard stereopticon slides and the View-Master disks of my childhood. I even remember going to a movie where the audience wore red and blue glasses to see action that seemed to take place both in front of and beyond the screen. (After the show we went out into the real world and blinked from one eye to the other as we watched everything switch from orangish to greenish.) Then the Polaroid 3D movies came out in full color, with giant frogs that jumped into our laps.

But the modern computer graphics version of 3D doesn't jump off the page or the monitor screen, and Aurora 3D Text & Logo Maker is a good way to learn both what modern 3D is all about and what you can do with it. 3D today is all about being able to put text or objects on your screen and then rotate what you are working on so you get a slanting perspective view; but as you do so you can add varying amounts of "thickness" to the letters to get the same effect as the "Superman" lettering that appeared on the cover of comic books back in the day.

Making those brightly colored, attention grabbing titles that appeared to have thickness took real talent on the part of the artists – and a lot of work to get the perspective just right. The same thing can be done today in Adobe Illustrator and a number of other vector graphics programs, but you pay a price for them in both cash and a steep learning curve. Aurora has changed that, making 3D easy for us to do.

So what exactly is the user able to do with Aurora 3D Text and Logo Maker? With this app we can develop web pages and sites with headers, dividers, pointers, and clip art type graphics that have visually dimensional features. Lettering, logos, and objects are not just done in flat mono-color, they can be given shape with shaded and gradient colors, visually beveled sides, and directional lighting. There are many included preset, but totally modifiable designs that provide starting points for your creations, and I found that about half the many fonts I've already accumulated on my computer can be swapped into the provided layouts and given the 3D treatments found in this program. In addition to the 3D effects, there are a number of button and menu selectable animations that can be applied to both the visual

objects and lighting effects that will give your creations lively action. But the graphics that you design are not just limited to your web creations, they can be used as clip art that can be added to printed brochures, advertisements, and business or personal letterheads.

Aurora 3D Text and Logo Maker includes a 60 page User Guide that covers the many features of the program and can be saved as a PDF. In addition there are a lot of YouTube videos by both Aurora and the user community that demonstrate the many features available and how to use them. I will have a list of some of the best of these videos at the meeting.

And I will add that Aurora has generously offered a 30% discount to KeyMac members interested in purchasing any of their programs. So come on out to the meeting and see what your Mac can do for you. ♻

by Steven Aquino

Accessibility Showdown:
iPhone 6 vs. iPhone 6 Plus

It seems almost comical in hindsight, but when Steve Jobs introduced the first iPhone in 2007, he described its 3.5-inch screen as "giant." And it was giant — at the time of the keynote, I had a flip phone with a postage stamp-sized display that was difficult for me to use, given that while I can see, I'm legally blind (for more on this sort of impairment, see Mariva H. Aviram's series, "Computing for the Visually Impaired"). The first time I saw the iPhone in person, I was awestruck by its large, high-resolution screen. Like so many others, I eventually got one.

Beginning with that original iPhone, I came to love the iPhone's form factor, first with that initial 3.5-inch screen and later with the 4-inch display of the iPhone 5s. Not only were those screens big and high-resolution (for their time), but the iPhones were easy to hold in my hand and carry in my pocket. That's a big deal for me — along with my visual impairments, I also suffer from cerebral palsy, which hampers the strength and mobility of my fingers. Other conditions that might cause similar problems include arthritis, carpal tunnel syndrome, multiple sclerosis, and previous fractures.

When rumors started swirling that Apple had two larger iPhones in the works, I was worried, and initially resolved to hold off out of fear that the sweet spot of usability and portability would be compromised. But after playing with the 4.7-inch iPhone 6 in person, I gave in and bought one. Despite its larger size, it maintained the balance of easy to see and ergonomics that I adored about my previous iPhones.

Yet, despite being content with the iPhone 6, I remained intrigued by its larger sibling, the 5.5-inch iPhone 6 Plus. I was keen to find out how, as a sort of a "phablet" (that crudely conjoined word describing larger smartphones), the iPhone 6 Plus would impact accessibility. To help answer my questions, Apple provided me with a review unit of the iPhone 6 Plus, which I've compared to my personal iPhone 6 over the last two months.

There are two main factors to consider when evaluating the accessibility of the iPhone 6 Plus: the size of the display and the size of the phone itself. This is true for anyone, but the importance of both are magnified for those of us with physical disabilities.

The iPhone 6 Plus Hardware — There is both good and bad with the iPhone 6 Plus, hardware-wise.

First, the good. The obvious benefit for someone who's visually impaired like me is that the iPhone 6 Plus's screen is gigantic. I was amazed at how vast (and wonderful) the difference is between the iPhone 6 and 6 Plus in terms of their displays. I immediately preferred the iPhone 6 Plus, based on screen size alone. If you have any kind of visual impairment, check out the iPhone 6 Plus; it is a revelation in the truest sense of the word. But that generous screen size comes with its own tradeoffs, as I'll explain shortly.

In this context, bigger truly is better: it allows for more content to be shown, and the 401 pixels-per-inch (ppi) screen is so bright and crisp that I find myself rarely squinting to read text. The screen is so good, in fact, that text is easily viewable for me at normal size (my preference, though it can also be set to show less content at larger sizes). The advantages of the iPhone 6 Plus's screen are such that I experience less eye strain and fatigue than on my iPhone 6, whose screen is "only" 326 ppi.

Alas, the sheer physical size of the iPhone 6 Plus hardware makes for a polarizing user experience. As wonderful as the screen is, the dimensions of the iPhone 6 Plus make me yearn for my smaller iPhone 6. The iPhone 6 Plus is a monster, making it cumbersome both to hold and carry in my pocket. Even getting it in and out of my pocket takes more effort than the iPhone 6, and it's much more obvious in my pocket as well.

This isn't just personal preference. Sure, my hands are small, but my cerebral palsy makes holding the iPhone 6 Plus awkward and uncomfortable, forcing me to adjust my grasp constantly to maintain control over the phone. Holding it to my ear during phone calls is hard too, because it's so smooth and hard to grip, and the size makes it weird to hold against my ear. (This is also true of using the iPhone 6 Plus in landscape orientation — it just doesn't feel right to me.)

On the whole, I've had a love-hate relationship with the iPhone 6 Plus. Its display is spectacular for my eyes, but its physical dimensions aren't conducive to my motor needs.

The iPhone 6 Plus Software — Using iOS 8 on the iPhone 6 Plus's larger screen is interesting, because it feels more like an iPad than it does an iPhone. From an accessibility standpoint, the greatest benefit that iOS on the iPhone 6 Plus offers is that it's running on a big screen.

What I said in the hardware section deserves mention here, too: the more stuff on screen, the better my eyes feel. This is because information is ready at a glance, without the need for much scrolling and, subsequently, eye tracking. It's a fine detail, to be sure, but as someone with a visual

impairment, the less energy my eyes need to work, the better my vision will be.

Worth noting, too, is the Display Zoom feature in iOS 8, which shows less content on screen, but makes everything bigger and thus easier to see. I don't use Display Zoom on the iPhone 6 or 6 Plus; instead, I find showing more content and using pinch-to-zoom to enlarge text to be sufficient for reading. You may prefer to use Display Zoom, if you suffer differently from low vision.

What makes iOS on the iPhone 6 Plus so iPad-like is that, like the iPad, it displays certain apps in landscape orientation. (This isn't true of the regular iPhone 6.) This added functionality should in theory be useful, but it isn't. The problem is, at least for me, again, the iPhone 6 Plus is uncomfortable to use in landscape orientation. Typing on an iPhone has long been an issue for me, and it's even worse on the iPhone 6 Plus. My thumbs aren't nimble enough to travel across the wider keyboard, so doing anything text-related is an exercise in futility. (In fairness, I have the same issue on my iPhone 6, though to a lesser extent.) As a result, I've used the iPhone 6 Plus almost exclusively in portrait orientation; even then, I have to resort to hunt-and-peck typing.

Another issue is reaching the upper corners of the screen; my fingers are simply too short. The Reachability shortcut (activated by double-touching the Touch ID sensor) does help remedy this — when I remember to use it. Plus, although Reachability brings distant interface items down to thumb level, it still doesn't make it possible for me to use the iPhone 6 Plus with one hand. Using my phone one-handed is a big win for me — I can do so on my regular iPhone 6 — and the iPhone 6 Plus fails in this regard.

The Verdict — As I was testing the iPhone 6 Plus and taking notes for this review, the phrase that kept coming to mind was "good enough." The regular iPhone 6 is

substantially larger than any iPhone before it, but it still feels like an iPhone. From an accessibility perspective, its 4.7-inch screen is plenty big and bright, but the iPhone 6 is also more manageable to hold and carry around. It has some issues, but it's good enough.

John Gruber made this point in his "high level take" of the iPhone 6 and 6 Plus:

If you simply want a bigger iPhone, get the 4.7-inch iPhone 6. That's what it feels like: a bigger iPhone.

If you want something bigger than an iPhone, get the 5.5-inch iPhone 6 Plus. It feels more like a new device — a hybrid device class that is bigger than an iPhone but smaller than an iPad mini — than it feels like a bigger iPhone.

Still, I struggled to determine which mattered more to me: screen size or hand feel. I so enjoyed using the iPhone 6 Plus's glorious screen that, for a brief time, I contemplated trading up to the iPhone 6 Plus, but I decided that the iPhone 6 Plus isn't appropriate for someone like me with motor disabilities. Given my circumstances, I need to balance the visual against the physical. In other words, to choose the iPhone 6 Plus based on screen size alone would make no sense, since the screen doesn't represent 100 percent of the experience. The kinesthetic value matters too, an angle that's especially important for users with special needs.

Overall, I liked the iPhone 6 Plus a lot, but I've sent my loaner back to Apple and happily returned to the iPhone 6. I can see the iPhone 6 Plus being terrific for someone who is dealing only with a vision impairment, but that someone isn't me. As much as some who don't have physical disabilities may gripe about the iPhone 6 Plus's extremes, they're even more of a nuisance for a person with challenges like mine — and there are a lot of people in that category.

The regular iPhone 6 is, at least for me, the right choice. ⬙

by Julio Ojeda-Zapata

Windows Goes Universal…
and Holographic

I'm rooting for Microsoft. I know, it sounds strange for me, a longtime Apple fan, to say this — on an Apple-focused site, no less.

But Microsoft, once dominant in the personal-computing space and now a perceived underdog to Apple and Google, has recently brimmed with promising, if poorly executed, ideas. I've particularly liked its Windows-based Surface computers, though Windows 8 is a mess and has been widely panned.

Microsoft's Windows Phone smartphones have not made much headway against Google Android phones and the

iPhone, either. I would never consider investing in such a device — and I say this as someone who finds a number of Android devices alluring.

Now Microsoft is trying again.

In another attempt to remain interesting to the forward-looking tech community, Microsoft on 21 January 2015 staged a major software and hardware unveiling that never flagged and often amazed. Keynote topics ranged from the routine, like Windows updates, to the unexpected, such as goggles that superimpose "holographic" constructs on the real world.

Let's take a look at what Microsoft announced, and how it compares to Apple's offerings.

Windows 10 Everywhere — Microsoft's take on personal computing can feel alien to Apple users since Microsoft emphasizes touch interaction on traditional PCs and pushes the concept of all-in-one devices such as tablet-like Surface PCs. In contrast, Apple has emphatically kept touch interaction out of OS X and has avoided hybrid Mac/iOS devices.

Don't look now, Cupertino fans, but the Redmond tech giant is going even further down its rabbit hole.

Windows 10, which had previously been released in an unfinished "technical preview" form, was shown off in a more-polished state and — crucially — as a single, all-purpose operating system for all devices ranging from smartphones and tablets to traditional laptop and desktop machines.

That doesn't mean Windows 10 looks identical on all gadgets. Tweaks are made to the interface depending on device size and such, but it's the same basic operating system under the hood.

This makes sense, and based on what I gleaned from the keynote, Windows 10 should be usable with either finger swipes (something you'd never do on a Mac) or a keyboard and mouse. On PCs with removable keyboards, Windows 10 knows which input devices are present, and offers up the appropriate input mode.

I'm particularly excited for the future of the Windows phone platform, which has suffered from a dearth of decent apps, since Windows developers can now write apps for pretty much all Windows 10 devices at once. This could finally make Windows-based smartphones into credible iPhone rivals — and competition is always good.

Some new features in Windows 10, like a right-hand Notifications pane extremely similar to OS X's Notification Center, seem like straight rip-offs, but all the big tech companies borrow freely from one another these days.

And Microsoft has done a nice job refining key features such as the previously reviled, tile-festooned Start Screen, now morphed into a tidy Start Menu with a full-screen option.

Windows 10 is due in late 2015, and will be free to those upgrading from Windows 7 or later during the first year.

This Is Spartan (and Office) — Starting in 1998, Microsoft's Internet Explorer was the default Web browser on Macs, only to be replaced by Apple's own Safari in 2003. Now Internet Explorer is being shown the door again, but this time in Windows.

Microsoft appears to be pushing aside the current Windows version of Internet Explorer for a new browser codenamed Spartan (though Internet Explorer will likely stick around a while for legacy support). Spartan is a clean-looking browser with a number of useful, though hardly ground-breaking, features, such as the option to mark up a Web page for sharing, along with controls for simplifying page text for reading, and adding a site to a reading list. These are like Reader View and Reading List in Safari.

Spartan has a brand-new rendering engine, too, but the benefits of that won't be fully clear until the app is released.

Microsoft's other major software announcement was a touch-friendly flavor of Office, which will be free on smaller Windows 10 devices. Millions of Windows users surely heaved a huge sigh of relief over this, since they've been in limbo while iOS and Android users got versions of Office for their devices. As an occasional Surface user, I felt their pain.
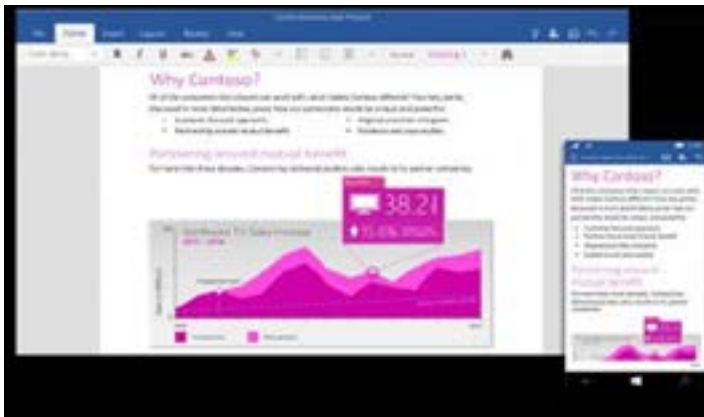
A non-touch version of Office for Windows, called Office 2016, also is coming, Microsoft said. So, reportedly, is a new version of Office for the Mac, but Microsoft had nothing new to say about that.

Hey Siri, I Mean, Cortana -- Remember the "butler" from the Knowledge Navigator concept video created for a keynote speech by former Apple CEO John Sculley? I felt flashes of that as I watched Microsoft's Joe Belfiori run a somewhat similar demo, though this time the technology, called Cortana, is real.

Cortana, Microsoft's answer to Siri, has existed on Windows Phone gadgets for a while, and with Windows 10 it's migrating to Windows PCs. Meanwhile, Siri's move to Mac OS X remains in the realm of rumor.

Belfiori playfully sparred with Cortana during the demo while having it look up stuff such as restaurant menus. It was a bit uneven — Cortana sometimes seemed almost human, and at other times stilted and computer — but invariably quite useful.

I'd be more skeptical of Cortana, given my inconsistent experiences with Siri and Google Voice Search, if I hadn't recently seen Amazon's Echo voice-guided hardware

assistant in action. The cylindrical gizmo is remarkably good at doing a user's bidding. If Cortana on the PC is similarly capable in real-world use, I'll be impressed.

Your move, Apple.

Getting Your Xbox Game On -- Gaming on a Mac often feels like an afterthought, but Microsoft is not about to let that happen on Windows — and it has a powerful weapon: the Xbox One game console.

Windows and the Xbox have, until now, been almost entirely separate, since they cater to very different audiences. With Windows 10, though, Microsoft is making these realms overlap to a larger extent. The Xbox, in fact, will become a Windows 10 device.

This opens up interesting possibilities. PC and Xbox users will be able to play with each other using their respective versions of the same game. Xbox gameplay will stream to a PC, essentially turning that computer's display into an Xbox screen. A DVR feature will record the last 30 seconds of Xbox or PC gameplay. Windows 10 will be bundled with a slick Xbox app showing games, friends, achievements, and the like.
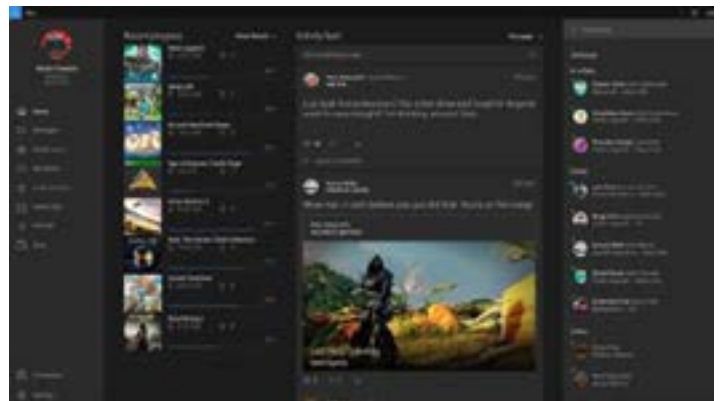
Although casual iOS games have been enormously successful for Apple, Microsoft's PC/Xbox integration would be tough to match. Game Center doesn't come close, and the company hasn't even shown inclination to put games on the Apple TV, much as it seems to make sense (see "FunBITS: Why Apple May Win the Gaming Market," 4 October 2013).

If you are a huge Xbox gamer, however, a PC purchase will look increasingly enticing. I wonder if my son, an Xbox fanatic, might come to regret his recent purchase of a Mac-Book Pro with Retina display. Apple's Boot Camp may do the trick for him, though.

Microsoft Television Arrives — Rumors of an Apple-branded large-screen TV are now widely discredited, but Microsoft unveiled something similar: the Surface Hub consisting of a Windows-based, 4K touch display to hang on an office wall for videoconferencing, white-boarding, and more.

The Surface Hub, available in 55- and 84-inch (!) models, has a laundry list of features such as Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and

dual video cameras with microphones along with custom flavors of apps like Skype and OneNote. The Surface Hub is due later this year; pricing has not been announced.

The Surface Hub could also presumably be used as an entertainment device, maybe with an Xbox One or even an Apple TV connected to it via an HDMI port. But this isn't the Surface Hub's intended purpose; Microsoft is aiming it squarely at the corporate crowd and envisions it as a tech tool for collaboration and communication, not amusement.

This is an interesting contrast to Apple, which is more focused on the home. I'd love to have the Surface Hub hanging in my home office, but I fear I'd never get any work done, despite Microsoft's focus.

Help Me, Obi-Wan Kenobi — The biggest surprise of this keynote was the HoloLens, a virtual-reality head-set that lets you see the real world around you — unlike Facebook's Oculus Rift — while adding three-dimensional digital constructs to your surroundings as enhancements or augmentations. The technology is called Windows Holographic. Neither pricing or release dates have been announced, but HoloLens is promised sometime in the "Windows 10 time frame."

Microsoft showed, for instance, how users could see and even walk around a NASA rover on the surface of Mars, engage in a bit of human-sized Minecraft gameplay, build a little drone using a set of virtual components and an app called HoloStudio, and see a motorcycle take shape via virtual pieces installed atop a shell of a physical bike. Check out the promo video.

Microsoft said the HoloLens could have a wide range of applications, ranging from use in laboratories and other specialized professional environments, to VR gaming and other entertainment activities in the home.

It looks a bit like Princess Leia projected by R2-D2 as she asks for General Kenobi's help, though no goggles were required in that fictional scenario. On the other hand, the holo-Leia didn't look nearly as nice as the Microsoft projections.

I want to be deeply skeptical of this. After all, Microsoft's motion-sensing Kinect gear is hardly a hit. High-tech headgear doesn't have a very good track record, either. Google's Glass hasn't caught fire. Even 3D HDTVs have been duds, largely because consumers haven't been eager to don bulky, dorky eyewear that is required to see 3D programming.

To counteract that consumer distaste for bizarre headgear, the HoloLens technology would have to be pretty darn amazing… but the tech writers who have tried a prototype are generally impressed with it. I'm withholding judgment until I can try it for myself, which probably won't happen until it's a shipping product. We'll see when that happens.

Microsoft's biggest challenge could be persuading developers to create Windows Holographic apps. After all, its Kinect technology spawned mostly mediocre games.

Microsoft on a Roll? — This blockbuster of a keynote has me more optimistic about Microsoft than I've been in years, though the success of these announcements is by no means assured.

Windows phones are in such a deep hole that achieving market viability alongside their Apple and Google rivals seems unlikely. Traditional PCs are in a better position, but the once-dominant machines are now underdogs amid an onslaught from nontraditional computing devices. Even the Xbox platform has been a pricey gamble for Microsoft, and is being outsold by Sony's PlayStation 4.

But, damn, Redmond put on a hell of a show, and it's nice to see innovation from any source. Go, Microsoft, go. ⬟

by Joe Kissell

Apple Mail:
The Yosemite Progress Report

About a year ago, following the release of OS X 10.9 Mavericks, I wrote a little article expressing unhappiness with some of the changes to Apple Mail — especially for Gmail users (see "Mail in Mavericks Changes the Gmail Equation," 22 October 2013). That rant turned into a bit of a meme, enough so that I was immortalized as a green rage monster. Over the following few months, Apple addressed many of my concerns in a series of updates (see "Mail in Mavericks: Is It Safe Yet?," 11 November 2013, and "Mail Improvements in OS X 10.9.2," 25 February 2014), and most of the furor over Mail's period of spectacular misbehavior died down.

Now that 10.10 Yosemite has been available for a couple of months (and the 10.10.1 update has been out for a month), I wanted to revisit the status of Apple Mail. Is it safe to use yet (or again)? Did Apple fix (fill-in-your-favorite-bug-here)? Are the new features worth it? Has Apple finally given Mail the care and attention it has needed for so long?

The short version is that Mail is (for better and worse) about as reliable as it was in Mavericks. There are a few interesting new features, a few odd changes, and a few bugs. But for the most part, if Mail was working for you in later versions of Mavericks, you'll have the same experience using Yosemite. If it wasn't working for you in Mavericks, you're not likely to find it substantially improved.

The Good News (with Qualifications) — Let me start by saying that Mail continues to be my primary email client, and that I use it happily and successfully every day. As I write this, I've received 479 messages today, not counting spam. But my Inbox has only two messages in it. (That's two more than I'd like, and I'll deal with them after I'm finished with this article.) As an email power user, I find Mail to be an excellent tool for the job. (It did require a bit of customization, but I'll get to that in a moment.)

However, note that I no longer use Gmail as my primary email provider. (To learn more about that decision, read my Macworld article "Why (and how) I'm saying goodbye to Gmail.") Although I have many different email accounts that I use for testing purposes (including Gmail, Exchange, and iCloud), the account I rely on most heavily is a good old-fashioned IMAP account. In my experience, that's the sort of account Mail works best with. When I hear tales of Mail woe, they most often come from people who use Gmail or Exchange, or who use POP instead of IMAP (see "FlippedBITS: Misconceptions about Changing Email Addresses," 4 March 2014).

Furthermore, as I've often lamented, Mail's default configuration is awful. In order to make Mail usable, I had to display and rearrange the mailbox list, create smart mailboxes, customize toolbars and message headers, fiddle with numerous preferences, and set up a bunch of sorting rules both on my mail server and within Mail. I also had to add several third-party plug-ins, of which the most important to me are Mail Act-On, SpamSieve, and GPGMail. But the end result is a client that behaves almost exactly the way I want it to. I've tried lots of other Mac email clients, and despite their many virtues, none of them give me all the capabilities that my customized copy of Mail does.

In short, if you think about email approximately the way I do (see "It's Not Email That's Broken, It's You," 23 February 2013), you use a conventional IMAP provider, and you're willing to spend a bit of time fiddling with settings and plug-ins, Mail in 10.10.1 is just fine. The further you find yourself from that position, the greater the chance Mail will annoy you.

Yosemite Changes — Apart from adopting Yosemite's new fonts and flat icons, Mail looks almost the same as it did in Mavericks. There are a few subtle changes. For example, section headings in the Mailbox List are no longer shown in all caps. If you receive a message that is both encrypted and signed, only the encryption badge appears in the message header, not the digital signature badge. And although the From pop-up menu still exists and still lets you choose a different address or account to send a message from, for some reason it doesn't look like a pop-up menu until you hover over it. But these are all trivial things.

Of the more substantive changes, the three biggest are Mail Drop, a new feature that routes attachments via iCloud rather than enclosing them in the body of your message; Markup, which lets you annotate PDFs and graphics without leaving Mail; and Handoff, which enables you to start composing a message on one device and pick it up instantly on another (without even saving it as a draft). These features all work approximately as advertised, and they're nice, but they all feel sort of tacked-on. I had been hoping the Mail team would take this opportunity to seriously rethink some of the less successful aspects of Mail's user interface, fix long-standing bugs, and modernize Mail with new organizational and automation features. Alas, all these hopes will be rolled over to my OS X 10.11 wish list.

If you want to know whether Mail "finally" plays nice with Gmail or Exchange, all I can really say as the most casual user of both account types is that I don't notice anything significantly different from the way Mail worked in Mavericks. That is, there are no fundamental design changes, but at least some of the bugs that existed in 10.9.5 still exist in 10.10.1.

There Will Be Bugs — I could spend a whole article cataloging Mail bugs both large and small, but I'll just hit the highlights. about Exchange sync problems (see, for example, this Apple Support Communities thread). I've also read numerous reports of crashes, although I haven't experienced any problems myself. One interesting bug I have encountered is that if you send a message in Plain Text format that includes an attachment — and that attachment is sent using Mail Drop — then sometimes the link to the attachment is the only thing that shows up for recipients or in your Sent mailbox; the rest of the message is blank. (The workaround is to use Rich Text, at least for any message that includes large attachments. You can change the format of the current message with Format > Make Rich Text or Format > Make Plain Text, or change your default setting in Mail > Preferences > Composing > Message Format.)

Shortly after Yosemite was released, I began to notice that when I moved a message from my Inbox to another mailbox, Mail appeared to do the right thing, but later the message reappeared in my Inbox (while a copy remained in the other mailbox). This turned out to have been caused by a bug in a beta version of Mail Act-On I was testing, so I didn't think anything of it. But Dan Frakes reports that he's seeing previously filed messages pop back into his Inbox with one of his Gmail accounts (but not another of them), even without the Mail Act-On plug-in installed.

Perhaps the most interesting and widespread bug I've heard about involves a new checkbox, which is optimistically labeled "Automatically detect and maintain account settings" and is selected by default. Apple claims this setting, when enabled, lets Mail automatically figure out things like which port and authentication method

to use, which might otherwise require trial and error to determine. Unfortunately, many users have found that Mail guesses wrong; with that box checked, Mail overrides manually entered correct values and causes connection failures.

The fix is to uncheck the box and fill in the right port and authentication settings manually, just as in previous versions of Mail. But you have to do this for each account — both incoming and outgoing. To fix incoming accounts, go to Mail > Preferences > Accounts > Account Name > Advanced and uncheck "Automatically detect and maintain account settings." For outgoing accounts, go to Mail > Preferences > Accounts > Account Name > Account Information and choose Edit SMTP Server List from the Outgoing Mail Server (SMTP) pop-up menu. Select an account in the list at the top, click Advanced, and uncheck "Automatically detect and maintain account settings." Repeat for each SMTP account.

Take Control of Apple Mail — People are constantly asking me if I've tried this or that hot new email client that promises to revolutionize the whole concept of email and solve all my problems. And I say thanks, but my email is already entirely under control. Apple Mail is far from perfect, and I'd be the first person to point out its flaws. Even so, it's the tool I like best, but that's because I've spent years fine-tuning everything to my liking, figuring how to solve or work around bugs, and experimenting to figure out the most effective ways to use it.

If you, too, want to like Apple Mail but feel that you can't quite get a grip on it, I'd like to offer my help. "Take Control of Apple Mail, Second Edition," freshly updated to cover Mail in both Yosemite and iOS 8, helps you understand Mail's idiosyncrasies, fix problems, optimize the app for greater efficiency, and even become a better correspondent. If you already have another email setup that works well for you, this book won't try to convert you to a Mail user. But it will help you to get the most out of Mail and get a feel for how powerful it can be with a few tweaks. 🍎

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by **Tim Sullivan**

Rumors and Reality

Around Apple

• Apple has, without warning, removed support for third-party SSDs in OS X 10.10 Yosemite, leaving anyone who uses one as a boot drive and has TRIM enabled with a Mac that won't boot. TRIM appears to be a software solution to managing unused blocks of SSD memory.

Some SSD drives, such as those supplied by OWC, do not require TRIM to be enabled because they have the feature built into the drive, and are as such unaffected.

The takeaway is that if you are running a third-party SSD as a boot drive, and you do have TRIM enabled, then you need to take steps before upgrading to Yosemite to make sure that your drive will continue to be accessible after the upgrade.

• GT Advanced Technologies, the company that was going to make the super-hard sapphire glass for Apple's iPhones, declared bankruptcy. This left Apple's new 1.3 million square factory in Mesa Arizona vacant.

Apple has decided to use the facility as a $2 billion "command center" for the network services Apple markets as iCloud.

It will be powered by 100 percent renewable energy, much of which will come from a new local solar farm.

• Angela Ahrendts joined Apple Inc. as Senior Vice President of Retail and Online Sales in 2014. That fact combined with upcoming Apple Watch sales foretells some big time changes to Apple Stores.

Current displays of wares together with a ratio of staff to customers just will not work when the Apple Watch goes on sale. Time and space in the store will be key to the new look.

The customer experience will change. The staff will need to sell fashion: the perfect watch size and color for each buyer. Of course it will take some time for the decision to be reached. Which is fine if you are being waited on, but not if you are waiting.

Product stocking (reportedly in locked safes), displays, inventory control and packaging will all complicate the Apple Watch sales universe. As well, there will be changes in processing returns (weighing the gold models to prevent metal theft), Genius Bar repairs or swaps, and even sales tracking. Apple will definitely want to discourage thefts. Many Apple stores already use armed guards.

Fluctuations in the ruble have caused Apple to halt online sales in Russia. Apple had already increased the Russian price of the iPhone 6 by 25 percent due to the ruble's plummet. Apple's online store is its primary means of selling to customers in Russia, since the company has no physical stores in the country.

One of iOS 8's touted features is HomeKit, which promises to unify home automation devices and allow them to be controlled by Siri. However, it wasn't until this year's Consumer Electronics Show that we learned that HomeKit is not quite ready for prime time.

For a fascinating infographic depicting the Evolution of iOS from iOS 1 thru iOS 8 check out <https://www.7dayshop.com/blog/ios-timeline-infographic/>

Dropbox will no longer support Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard as of 18 May 2015.

Online backup service Backblaze released its internal data on hard drive reliability. Backblaze does use big discs in the multi-terabyte size. Nonetheless the results are worth looking over. Their takeaway: The most reliable drives for the price were 4 TB drives from Seagate.

Torture testing the M-disk. Check out one man's tests.

 Google Translate has a new and improved look.

The first update incorporates technology from Google's acquisition of the startup behind automated translation app Word Lens last spring. Now you can point your phone camera at any piece of text — such as a sign in a foreign country — and instantly see an overlaid real-time translation on screen.

The app's second significant update supports real-time conversation by streamlining the process by which voice-to-text translation is carried out. Before, users had to select the languages they wanted to translate between, and then tap a button in the app whenever they wanted to begin speaking. That has now been simplified, since after the two languages have been entered, Translate will automatically pick up on which of the languages is being spoken—and automatically translate accordingly.

What is not clear: does the app have to be connected to the internet? I considered using this technology on a recent overseas trip until I realized I would not have internet access when I needed the app and utilizing the LTE phone connection would break my piggy bank.

Sugru: I usually unwind with my iPad and YouTube each evening. I recently watched a video on Sugru. It has been described as play dough for adults. It is an adhesive silicon putty. Its uses are only limited by your imagination. It is water proof, heat and cold tolerant (up to a point), and acts as an electric insulator. Did I mention, it's adhesive. It will stick to almost anything. To avoid frivolous lawsuits, the company warns not to trust your weight to it, but it does support a reasonable load.

It comes in a few colors which can be combined to create new colors.

It can be used to repair or strengthen, such a loose connection.

Use it to create unique IDs for your equipment.

Build things to improve your workspace.

MAKE YOUR OWN STYLUS
USING SPONGE + SUGRU

Can't find it again, but one person used some to enhance his ear buds. Besides getting a more comfortable fit with better noise reduction, the earbuds stayed in place without falling out. ♻

January Software Review

Lexmark Printer Driver 3.0
Jan 29, 2015 — 181.31 MB

System Requirements
– OS X Mavericks
– OS X Mountain Lion
– OS X Lion 10.7 or later

This update installs the latest software for your Lexmark printer or scanner.

iTunes 12.1
Jan 29, 2015 — 216.6 MB

System Requirements
– OS X 10.7.5 or later
– 400MB of available disk space
– iTunes Radio requires OS X version 10.7 or later
– iTunes Extras requires OS X version 10.9.3 or later

This update introduces a new iTunes widget for Notification Center in OS X Yosemite. See what's playing, skip ahead, and even buy songs while listening to iTunes Radio — right from Notification Center. This update also improves performance when syncing with your iPhone, iPad, or iPod touch.

OS X Yosemite 10.10.2 Combo Update
Jan 28, 2015 — 840.3 MB

System Requirements
– OS X Yosemite 10.10

This update includes the following improvements:
• Resolves an issue that might cause Wi-Fi to disconnect
• Resolves an issue that might cause web pages to load slowly
• Fixes an issue that could cause Spotlight to load remote email content when this preference is disabled in Mail
• Improves audio and video sync when using Bluetooth headphones
• Adds the ability to browse iCloud Drive in Time Machine
• Improves VoiceOver speech performance
• Resolves an issue that could cause VoiceOver to echo characters when entering text on a web page
• Addresses an issue that could cause the input method to switch languages unexpectedly
• Improves stability and security in Safari

Security Update 2015-001 Mountain Lion
Jan 27, 2015 — 177.4 MB

System Requirements

– OS X Mountain Lion 10.8

Security Update 2015-001 is recommended for all users and improves the security of OS X.

Security Update 2015-001 Mavericks

Jan 27, 2015 — 62.3 MB

System Requirements
– OS X Mavericks 10.9

Security Update 2015-001 is recommended for all users and improves the security of OS X.

OS X Yosemite 10.10.2 Update

Jan 27, 2015 — 554.3 MB

System Requirements
– OS X Yosemite 10.10.1

This update includes the following improvements:

• Resolves an issue that might cause Wi-Fi to disconnect
• Resolves an issue that might cause web pages to load slowly
• Fixes an issue that could cause Spotlight to load remote email content when this preference is disabled in Mail
• Improves audio and video sync when using Bluetooth headphones

• Adds the ability to browse iCloud Drive in Time Machine
• Improves VoiceOver speech performance
• Resolves an issue that could cause VoiceOver to echo characters when entering text on a web page
• Addresses an issue that could cause the input method to switch languages unexpectedly
• Improves stability and security in Safari

iOS 8.1.3

Jan 27, 2015

System Requirements
– iPhone 4s or later
– iPad 2 or later
– iPad mini or later
– iPod touch (5th gen)

This release includes bug fixes, increased stability and performance improvements, including:
• Reduces the amount of storage required to perform a software update
• Fixes an issue that prevented some users from entering their Apple ID password for Messages and FaceTime
• Addresses an issue that caused Spotlight to stop displaying app results
• Fixes an issue which prevented multitasking gestures from working on iPad

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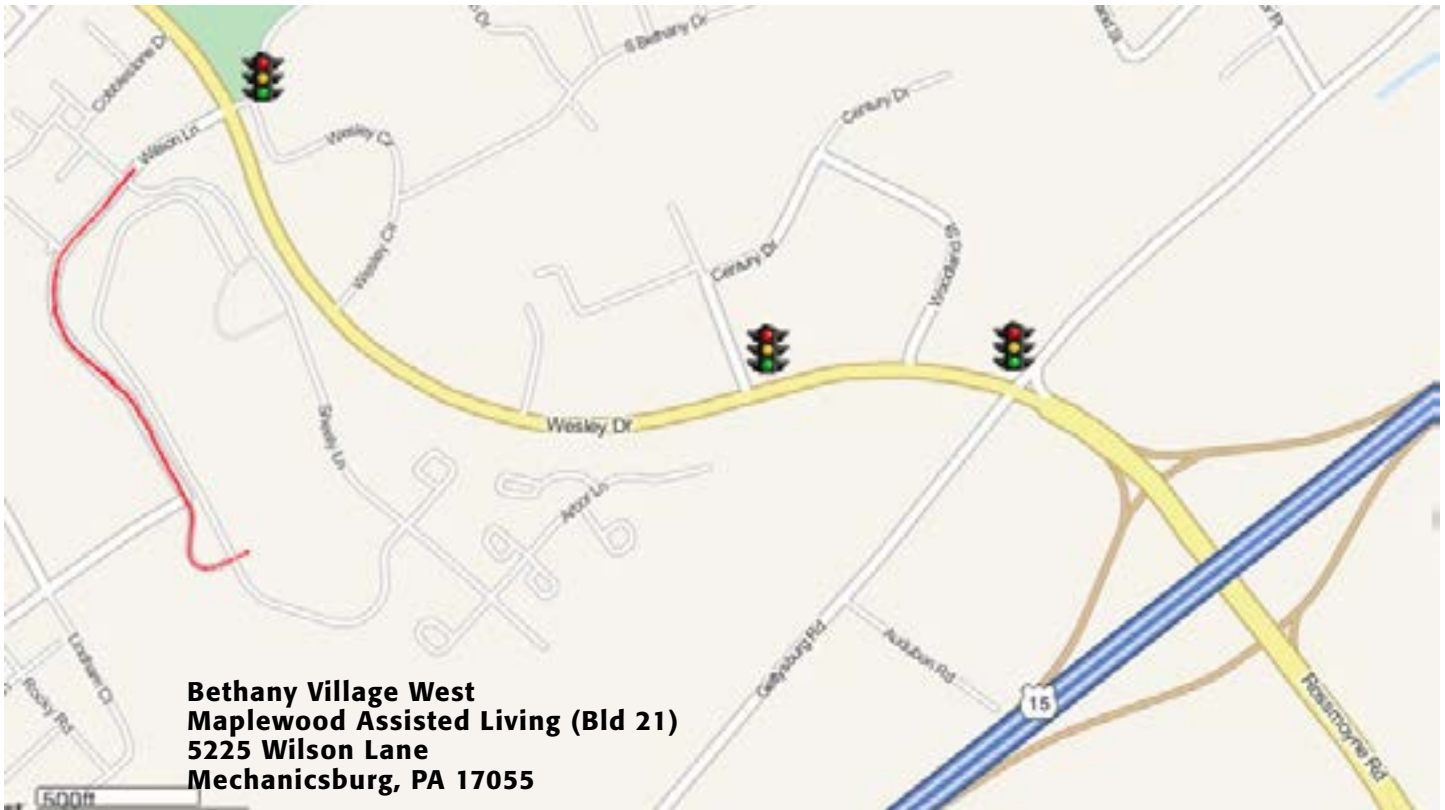
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