



Apple's most difficult market has always been servers. It is easy to justify a user-friendly graphical interface on client computers, but the inevitable overhead that would impose on a server cannot be justified when you may even run it "headless" (without a monitor).

AppleShare servers are famously easy to set up and maintain, but once you need to run serious applications, such as a heavyweight database, even high-end Macs quickly run out of steam. You were probably as puzzled as I was when Apple launched its Network Server systems a few months ago. I wasn't sure whether they were a step towards the promised multiple operating system, CHRP (now PPCP) machines, or whether they were the final nail in the coffin of Apple's old Unix clone A/UX (replacing it with IBM's AIX).

Having spent time at Computers Unlimited, the UK distributor for Apple Network Servers and their software, I can report that the servers are something quite different. They are aimed squarely at those whose requirements cannot be met by an Apple Workstation Server (running Mac OS) and who need the performance of Unix in the form of AIX. But they offer more than any other server I have seen and are already building a fine reputation at Apple's major web sites, such as the QuickTime

Mail bonding

Howard Oakley gets chummy with Apple network servers, bemoans system problems and beats battery bugs.

web server in Napa, California.

The touch of genius which Apple has applied to its Network Servers is to incorporate an AppleTalk stack in the networking protocols and build in support for AppleScript. These allow you to perform almost all network administrative tasks from a Mac, even dialling in with AppleTalk Remote Access if you wish. IPT has come up with some incredible tools to make user administration tasks as simple as the Users and Groups control panel, and allow you to build your own scripts, using Facespan's pleasant Mac-friendly human interface.

Mail servers

Using Macs with some Internet Service Providers (ISPs) can remain a troubled business. The otherwise excellent Demon, for instance, normally delivers mail using the Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP), as commonly used between servers on the internet. Sadly, most Mac mail applications only support the Post Office Protocol

(POP). Until recently, the solutions were limited. You could receive mail using LeeMail, and send it from Eudora, but that made replying to messages very messy. Then Alan Staniforth wrote AddMail, an SMTP receiver which could con Eudora into working with its received mail. Although very effective, AddMail has its problems, and may be unstable on recent Power Mac models.

There are only three affordable mail servers which support SMTP and POP. CommuniGate is an impressive mix-and-match toolset which can be tried freely but costs a fair amount to buy. It is fiddly to configure, and I have not yet got it to provide a POP service to other mail applications. Vicom's Internet Gateway is available in demo version on the internet but is more expensive still. I haven't managed to get this to work fully, either. The best solution for now seems to be the cheapest: Apple Internet Mail Server (AIMS) version 1.1.1, which is free if you register online.

I have now configured FreePPP 2.5v2, the new updated version of FreePPP, to start up AIMS as soon as my internet connection is made. AIMS then runs the SMTP exchange with Demon's Unix servers, and allows Claris EMailer to connect to it using POP. The only real snag is that AIMS only works its magic when the internet connection is live, so I have to exchange mail with it while online. As soon as FreePPP disconnects, AIMS plays dead and must be quit.

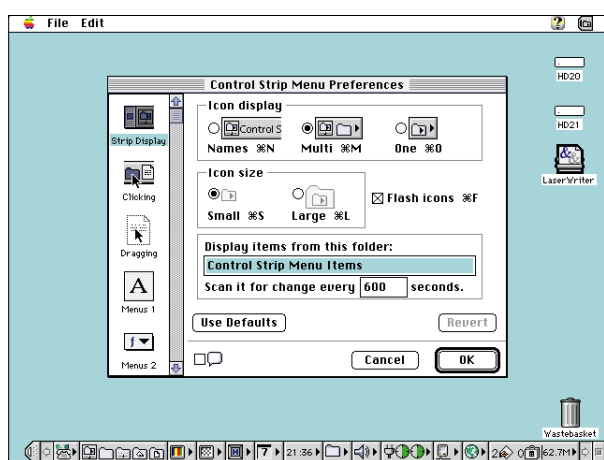
Odds and ends

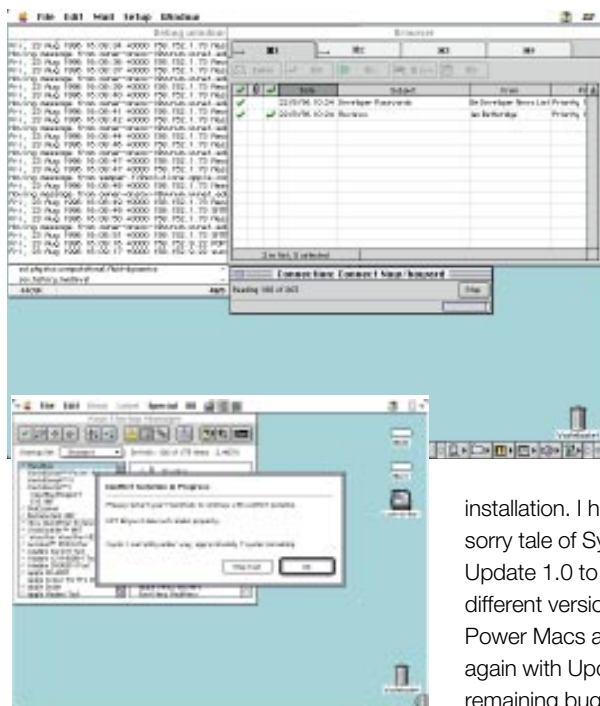
KPT Bryce 2 is frequently touted as a brilliant tool for creating landscapes, and so it is. But when I bought my copy, it seemed to behave oddly in some respects (now, I

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Control strip tip

Turn your System 7.5's Control Strip into a powerful document and applications launcher with the shareware Control Strip Menu 3.0, available from major online sites. Drop folders, files and aliases into its folder within the System Folder to add new items to its pop-up launcher menu.





Top left Claris E-mailer accessing the free Apple Internet Mail Server (AIMS) while online with Demon. Although this combination is cheap, effective and reliable, it is irritating that AIMS will only work when the internet connection is active

Bottom left Now Startup Manager, a component of Now Utilities, includes assistance for isolating extension conflicts

installation. I hope that it is the end of the sorry tale of System 7.5, patched with Update 1.0 to 7.5.1, confused with two different versions of 7.5.2 to support PCI Power Macs and PowerBooks, patched again with Update 2.0, and now with remaining bugs fixed in Revision 1.

Mac OS 8

Apple needs to be careful that Mac OS 8 does not go the same way. Its surprise announcement that Mac OS 8 would not be a single, clean release, but a series of upgrades appearing at regular intervals, brought dismay to many.

Some have second-guessed that this new strategy indicates serious problems in the already huge development team, yet the evidence is against it. Early demonstrations have shown that OS 8 is making good progress, and many components are almost ready to release. That is precisely why Apple says it is changing to this new approach. But I think another good reason is to ensure a smooth transition among third parties, so that OS 8 is not starved of good applications for many months. Closer

gather, it has been fixed in version 2.1 available to registered owners). Having just bought Now Utilities 6.0, I went into the Now Startup Manager, which is the more sophisticated equivalent of Apple's free Extensions Manager, and tweaked the list of enabled extensions. Somewhere along the line, I must have turned off the Shared Code Manager because for several intensely frustrating hours I suffered from all sorts of weird problems.

My AppleVision 1710 monitor switched back to the default 640 x 480 resolution, and its controls disappeared. AppleTalk could not be turned on and refused to give a clue as to why this was. If you ever experience this sort of disaster, go back and check that the core extensions, particularly the Shared Code Manager, are turned on. This type of problem is getting more and more irksome. Apple has at last released the international version of System 7.5 Revision 2, thankfully a mere two disks rather than Update 2.0's 14. It is essential for those using RAM Doublers on a Power Mac, and for those with PowerBooks containing PowerPC processors. Other users will probably not benefit from its

PowerBooks ahoy!

PowerBooks are *de rigueur* on private craft and commercial fishing boats. MaxSea is an integrated navigational and charting



package. The charts aren't cheap (this one is part of a £1,000 CD of Admiralty charts for the Channel) but are easier to use than paper versions.

collaboration with Microsoft and other major vendors should allow us to keep running Word and Excel without a hiatus.

■ Next month, I will deal with OS 8's human interface, and will look at ways of programming the Mac without turning pro. I will share my experience of Apple's LaserWriter 12/640PS duplex laser printer.

Batteries Included

An introduction to problems caused by a flat battery in desktop Macs.

1. Your Mac is one of the following models:

- LC series (LC, LCII, LCIII)
- 475 series (Quadra, Performa or LC475)
- Power Mac 6100

(some others may suffer similar fates).

2. Your Mac fails to start up.

- Typically, the startup process begins, you hear the normal startup sound (no sinister "chimes") but everything halts early on.
- The screen is usually black, but may show part of the startup process.
- If using an AppleVision monitor (which turns on automatically), the monitor may not turn on at all.
- If using a video card, your Mac may start up better if the monitor is connected to the built-in monitor port instead.
- The Mac may fail to start up altogether.

3. If you manage to get it started, behaviour may be odd.

- Various settings may be reset to default.
- The System clock is reset to a time just after midnight many years ago (this is almost diagnostic).

Solution: Replace the battery on the motherboard. The component is, in most cases, a 3.6V Lithium battery and should cost less than £10 inclusive of fitting. Once replaced, although you will have to reset the clock etc, abnormal behaviour should be eradicated.

•PCW Contacts

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Apple Computers 0181 569 1199 or www.apple.com and www.euro.apple.com
www.support.apple.com for System 7.5 Rev. 2
Computers Unlimited 0181 358 5857 for Apple Network Servers

AIMS www.cybertech.apple.com/
Claris 0181 756 0101 for Claris E-mailer (£40 plus VAT)

Now Software 01525 237100 for Now Utilities 6.5 (£50 plus VAT)

Island Computer Systems 01983 821717 for MaxSea (£700 plus VAT)