

ello, and welcome to this month's edition of A Spider Speaks. This monthly column is dedicated to providing you with a wealthy source of tips, tricks, and other information. Comments or questions can be sent to me at [erik@applewizards.net](mailto:erik@applewizards.net) . I'm always open to suggestions for future columns, so fire up your email application and push some bytes my way.

## t's Not Like Christmas Morning, You Know

Christmas morning — packages are strewn about, wrapping paper hides your carpet, and somewhere in the pile is your new CD. But where?

Many people have similar experiences when they attempt to locate files on their Mac's hard drive. Life doesn't have to be that hard. Christmas day comes but once a year — let's keep it that way!

Organization is critical to using a Mac efficiently. There are a great many ways to organize your Mac, and I hope to cover a few of them. It is important to remember that what works for me may not work for 99% of other Mac users, and what works for you may not work for anyone else at all. However, I aim to present a few simple tips that will help at least some people, or at the very least give you a few ideas. And if you're curious, I eventually did find that CD...

## Partitions, Smart-partitions

Partitioning a hard drive is one of the best ways I've found to organize the desktop and file system. For example, my 9 GB drive would be a mess if it were just that — a single drive. However, carefully partitioned, my 9 GB drive provides me with 8 partitions on the desktop, all ready for immediate access, all with specific purposes (and specific files).

Though I won't get too far into detail on how to create partitions (it varies depending on what software you use), I will list some ideas for possible partitions and sizes.

### System Partition

I create a system partition on every Mac I have the pleasure of working with. My system partitions range in size from 250 to 500 MB and contain only the System Folder. Putting the system folder on its own partition creates a more secure system. I recommend that you size your system partition by doubling the size of your current system folder. This leaves room for clean installs and gives your System Folder a little "room to breathe."

### Applications

Create another partition for your applications. Don't put anything else there — don't save your website in the applications partition, don't save some cool Kaleidoscope schemes there, and don't save Aunt Melma's fruitcake recipe there. Leave yourself enough room — we all know how much space software such as Office '98 or Unreal take up. By the way, my applications partition is called "Spot" because, after all, applications Run, Spot, Run.

### Documents

Create another partition for your documents. Store only your documents — whatever those may be — here. These include your résumé, your website, and Aunt Melma's recipe. Be strict — don't install software that belongs on your applications partition here. Unless you work with large image files or movies, your documents partition can often be smaller than you initially

believe. If you're a packrat, though, leave yourself enough room.

Downloads

downloads

allow for

occasional large

I download enough stuff that creating my own partition makes sense. I typically size it at 500 MB to temporary or emergency storage as well as the download. After all, there's nothing worse than watching the progress bar hit 98% before Navigator deletes your file with some lame warning about disk space.

Personalize!

I also have a scratch partition (for Navigator and Photoshop cache/scratch files), two partitions strictly devoted to my jobs (one of which is Apple Wizards), and a partition that takes up the "left-over" space. Typically I use the last one of these as a CD-burning partition, though I've also used it in hundreds of other roles. My point: customize your partitioning scheme to fit your needs. Everyone's different, so think different.

## How Where Did that Folder Go...

Just as historians try to pigeon-hole events, people, and wars into time periods, geopolitical regions, deciding factors, and gosh knows what else, computer users try to pigeon-hole items as well. Look at how your system folder is organized: control panels, extensions, preferences, fonts, etc.

A certain law of science says that everything can be categorized into six categories or less. To that end, try to organize your software, your documents, your entire folder structure into groups of no more than six items for the first three to four levels. For example, Spot, my applications partition, contains five folders, and each of those contain a few folders, and so on.

Keeping the number of items to a minimum (six or less in most cases) allows you to quickly find the appropriate folder or item. For example, common

sense tells me that to find one of my graphics apps, I should look at the path [Spot:Graphic/Video:Graphic:Item\\_Name](#).

Organizing your folder structure allows you to do many things, and do them quickly. Open/Save dialog boxes will be more easily dealt with. Spring-loaded folders (I often use spring-loaded folders when dragging items around) become easier to navigate. Go ahead, impress your friends!

Organizing items by groups of six or less allows you to do two other things as well:

1. View items in a folder as large icons instead of as lists or as small icons. Small icons are just that — small. They make it very difficult to find what you're looking for.
2. Use custom icons. Nothing attracts more attention to a folder than a custom icon, and with carefully chosen icons, you can navigate your Mac faster than ever. Custom small icons are a waste of hard drive space, so go big!

## Clean Apple Menu a Day...

Whenever I visit someone else's Mac, the first thing I look at is their Apple Menu. Why? It's a great indication of how organized they are.

My Apple Menu is pristine. What can I say, 'm anal retentive or something... How can you create a fantastic, feature-rich Apple Menu? Well, here's how mine is laid out.

First, I place two spaces in front of my Control Panels folder alias. This places it at the top of the list for quick access. Next, with a single space in front of their names, are an Apple Menu Items folder alias and an Automated Tasks folder alias.

Next, with a single space before its name of dashes (-----), is a text clipping. This clipping file has an invisible icon\*, so it serves as a divider which I find very useful. My dividers are text clippings rather than files or applications because text clippings launch within the Finder itself, so I won't waste time (or RAM) if I accidentally choose

my divider instead of the object I intended to choose.

Following the first divider are aliases to three of my most often used partitions, each with a plus (+) sign in front of their names (and a subsequent space for cosmetics).

Following the partitions, I've used a copy of the same text clipping file, this time without the leading space. Following that final divider, I place aliases to my most often-used applications (some of which have been cut from the graphic above to in the interest of space).

If you don't use Key Caps, Jigsaw Puzzle, Stickies, or the Scrapbook very often, stuff them into their own folder at the bottom of the Apple Menu. I've called mine "•Rarely Used" (option-8 generates the bullet) because the bullet comes, alphabetically, after the z. This allows me to group my Apple-provided and sometimes-useful applications and provide myself with quick access to them without cluttering my Apple Menu.

There you have it: an anal person's Apple Menu, dividers and all. If only my Christmas wish list were so organized.

\* To create an invisible icon, simply take a screenshot of some white space, then paste that "whiteness" into the Get Info window as you normally would paste an icon. Your icon should be blank!

Note: As of this writing, only Apple Menu Options was fully compatible with Mac OS 8.5. I am personally awaiting the arrival of an 8.5-ready BeHierarchic and/or MenuChoice. Both have organizational options that you just can't find in AMO — options that may render my way of organizing things obsolete.

## and Speed Records in Jeopardy?

No, not really. However, with a nicely organized Mac, you can effectively add 50 MHz to your personal processor speed. I like how that sounds. Don't you? Go ahead, beat the spring rush and do your cleaning now!

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