

•By Barbara Bell <barbara@mymac.com>•

Hello, everyone!

As I sit here, enjoying the late summer afternoon, I realize I'm having trouble deciding what to write about this month. Should I whine more about Windoze? Probably not. Everybody who's anybody realizes the situation there (although I will say MS Access is not even close to being the powerful program FileMaker is!).

Should I talk about my first visit to a cadaver lab? No; some folks are squeamish. What about Tomb Raider? I got the program a few weeks ago and am enjoying it immensely. Not enough hours in the day to play that game. How about how easy it is to use an USB hub? Very easy! Truly plug and play (honest, that's all there is!)

Or how about the problems with my Imation SuperDisk drive? Ah, that I should probably touch on. I mentioned previously that mounting floppy disks on the SuperDisk drive was a little bit difficult. My only success was putting the floppy in first, then turning on the iMac and usually rebuilding the desktop of both my hard drive and the floppy. Well, that's starting not to work! The worst part is when the system does not recognize the floppy. You have to keep rebooting until it does. Why? There is no way to get the darn thing out! You press the little button on the front of the drive and nothing happens. I finally got fed up enough to write Imation on July 21. Today is August 3. Let's see... that's two weeks! Apparently, Imation's not real good with customer service, either. Obviously they don't realize a lot of people bought their drive so they could use existing floppies. The 120mb SuperDisk, for me anyway, was an extra added bonus. I am now regretting my purchase. What started as merely inconvenient has blown up into impossible. Should the situation change, I'll let you know.

Mmmmmm, what else? Oh, Pete Miner wrote a wonderful review on the

iMacButton. I was so thrilled I bought one! He and I both agree the pinhole restart on the iMac is kinda stupid. The iMacButton takes care of that. And it's reasonably priced.

Helpful Hints

Specific program problems: If you are having problems with a specific program, it may be the program Preferences. So, how to fix? Well first, hold down your Shift key while restarting. That disables your extensions. Then, drag the application's Preferences out of the Preferences folder located inside the System folder. Put it anywhere for now, just not in the System folder. Restart. If your problems disappear, the Preferences was the culprit. You can now trash the Preferences file or folder you removed from the Preferences folder. The application makes a new Preferences for itself the next time it runs.

Crashing, crashing, crashing: No matter how stable your system, crashes do happen. If they happen frequently, obviously something needs to be fixed. Don't freak out—although it is certainly easy to do! (I certainly have!) First, keep track of what you are doing. Write it down if you have to. If you can't solve the problem, that information will be invaluable to tech support.

Pay attention to what conditions the crash occurs. Is it always with AOL? What version? Is it always right after using QuarkXpress? Again, what version? After you've noted the specifics, then start your problem solving: try removing extensions, or removing Preference files, or perform a clean install of the program... you know, all the stuff you normally do when trying to fix your Mac. And don't forget to rebuild the Desktop! Sometimes that's all that's needed.

Last, don't forget to write down what you do! If, after performing all the Macmagic you know, the problem still occurs, call tech support. Hopefully, with all the information you have gathered, they'll be able to get down to the nitty gritty and help you fix the problem quickly and permanently.

Application Switching: OS 8.5 has this neat little trick: you can tear off the Application menu from the Finder menu. What?? Okay, in the upper right hand corner of your Finder menu, there is the little application icon next to the name of the application you are currently using. That's your Application menu. Now, most people click on that corner (a drop down menu appears, showing you all the open applications) and they pick the application they want to switch to. But say you want to tab between menus rather than using that drop down menu all the time.

Why? Well, depending on how you work, it could be much faster and convenient. So, how do you do it?

By tearing off the Application menu. Just drag your cursor down and past the menu. Then position the window where you want it to reside. To move among the options (the different open applications, I mean), Command-Tab or Command-Shift-Tab. Quite honestly, I haven't decided if I like it; I'm used to clicking all over the place. But I will try it. And, if you use Windoze frequently, you'll find it mirrors the Alt-Tab function in Windows 95.

True Story: A friend of mine is a freelance desktop publisher. She also has had extensive training on Macintosh technical support. She knows these machines inside and out. She broke down and purchased one of those neat, Bondi Blue G-3s. She was so excited! Except, it wouldn't work! It kept crashing. She called me, frantic and needing a shoulder to cry on. All that money, all that excitement, down the tubes. I asked if she rebuilt the desktop (I felt funny, knowing her technical background, but I figured thinking out loud might help her find the solution.). She said, "No. It's just out of the box, so why bother?" "Well," I said, "these things come preloaded with all sorts of software and sometimes upgrades to the OS are done prior to shipment by the reseller. Who knows what was done to your hard drive before it arrived?" So, for the heck of it, and out of true desperation, she rebuilt the desktop. And guess what? Yup! It worked!!! Problem solved! She felt sheepish but relieved. I was gratified my little 'this will solve anything' trick worked so well!

Internet Site of the Month: <<http://www.MackiDo.com/Innovation>>

This site talks about Mac innovations. Great reading and good ammunition against Windoze fans who think Bill Gates thought up all that neat stuff like the mouse and windows and icons!

Happy Fall!

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Websites mentioned:

<<http://www.mactimes.com/bin/news/index.p1?read=2070>>

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