



Apple Blossom Computer Club
A registered Apple/Macintosh User Group



Mar '07

still only

\$2.00

The

ROSE



BYTER

Next Meeting

Wednesday

Mar. 21

5:30 ~ 7:30 PM

Room #8

Joseph Lane

Middle School

2156 NE Vine Street

My iMac G5 and Valley Software in Grants Pass

by Jim McClellan <mcclellan@charter.net>

Agenda

1. Meeting starts at 5:30 P.M.
2. Introductions of members and guests
3. Old business
4. New business
5. Questions & (maybe)Answers
6. Program: Phil Bowser will show us how to use iChat using voice and video.

New variable meeting schedule:

April: Tuesday, the 17-th



In late January my iMac G5 computer quit working. I called guru Walt and iMac he suggested I remove the back cover and blow out the dust. because they can shut down from overheating. While doing this, I noticed that several capacitors appeared to be bulging, so I took it out to his place and had him look too. He agreed and we tried to check the warranty on the G5. It was a refurbished computer and didn't appear to be still be under warranty.

I called Apple and they agreed, and recommended I take it to an authorized repair facility. I checked with Apple on the web and found that both Eugene and Grants Pass had one. I decided to go to Valley Software in Grants Pass because it was a bit closer and easier for me to get to.

I called and found that they had

moved since my last visit. I was told to take exit 55 on I-5 and then to turn left on the first four traffic lights I came to. They were about 1/3 of a mile down the Rogue River Highway on the left.

When I arrived, Bob Loeser, their tech guy, who also is the owner, looked at the motherboard closely and found the original serial number. He checked and the computer was still under warranty because of a warranty extension just for this issue! To make a long story shorter, he ordered the parts and called me after 6 PM when he had received the parts and checked out the computer. I was able to drive down the next morning and pick it up. Check out Valley Software's website:

<http://www.valleysoft.net/>
They even have a small classroom for the classes they offer.

Letters

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The **Apple Blossom Computer Club** (ABCC) is an Apple Computer Inc., registered Macintosh and Apple][family user group. The ABCC publishes *The RoseByter* newsletter monthly which is posted to each paid up member and reciprocating user groups. ABCC participates in user group newsletter content exchange. The ABCC also maintains a WWW site at:

<http://www.abccmug.org>

Membership

Just \$20/year! Send with your name, snail- & e-mail address & phone to:
 ABCC
 PO Box 638
 Winston, OR 97496

Current ABCC Leadership

President

Walt Pawley <walt@wump.org>

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Phil Bowser <philip574@aol.com>

Send your stories and newsletter ideas to the Editor, Walt Pawley, at <walt@wump.org>. Plain text files are preferred, sent within the body of an email message or as an attachment. Mail physical media to:

**676 River Bend Road
 Roseburg, OR 97470**

Please understand that materials submitted may not be used and those that are will likely be edited.

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Dear Editor:

I like to take photos, but how impressive is a tee-ninesy 4x6 print anyway? There is something about a HUGE print that just screams "HEY-LOOK AT ME! I'M AN IMPORTANT WORK OF ART!!!!!" But who has the \$30 (or more) to get some poster company to blow up an image?

Well, hey—I just found a website called www.blockposter.com. You upload your image (1 megabyte limit). You tell the website how big you want it. Then the website downloads an Adobe Acrobat file that you can print out on your home printer. (You should have the free Acrobat Reader application already installed on

your 'puter, but if you don't you can download it from www.adobe.com).

Say you want a poster that is in landscape format, about 6 pages wide and 3 pages high. That's what you get back in an Acrobat file—18 pages! You print them and then glue, tape, mount, or thumbtack the pages to your wall. Talk about impressing the neighbors!

If everybody tries out this service and brings one BIG PIX to an ABCC club meeting, we could have one heckuva art show! Might be fun. Waddaya think? Shall we pick a date?

Phil Bowser
 <philip574@aol.com>



February 2007 financial report

From: Jim McClellan
 <mcclellan@charter.net>

Beginning Cash	\$2,171.70
Income:	
Dues	\$100.00
Interest	\$0.80
Expenses:	
Newsletter, etc.	\$28.75
Ending Cash	\$2,243.75

You Keep Changing Your Spots!



Folks, we have a problem. It seems that you keep changing your spots. Not too surprising really. A fresh coat of spotted paint can do wonders.

But the problem is that ABCC needs to be kept up on how your spots have changed if it's to serve you properly. So, if you change addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, chat handles, etc., please drop "management" an e-note, eh. Probably best to send changes directly to Jim McClellan <mcclellan@charter.net>.

Cybercrime Treaty:

What it Means to You

March 6, 2007, by Larry Downes

<http://www.ciainsight.com/article2/0,1540,2100916,00.asp?kc=COQFTEMNL030607E0AD>

A new global treaty could put the responsibility—and potentially enormous cost—of fighting cyber-criminals squarely on your shoulders.

Cybercrime is getting cheaper all the time, as shady characters sell tools to help criminals spam, phish, hack and crash. And a new treaty ratified by the U.S. Senate could wind up passing the costs of combating cybercrime directly to American businesses.

From an economic standpoint, when the cost of crime goes down, frequency goes up. How does the legal system fight back? One way is to increase enforcement and catch more people. But when it comes to cybercrime, no one really expects law enforcement to keep up technologically with criminals—it's an arms race the criminals keep winning. An alternative is to raise the penalties, in hopes of deterring criminals who weigh the benefits of committing their crimes against the risk of getting caught.

In that vein, in August the Senate ratified the Convention on Cybercrime, drafted by the Council of Europe with

considerable input from the United States. So far, 43 nations have signed on. The Convention includes many sensible provisions aimed at unifying global computer-crime laws, and closes loopholes that make it possible for criminals to escape prosecution by locating their activities offshore.

But civil libertarians, along with leading telecommunications companies, strongly oppose the treaty. Civil libertarians are especially concerned about the sweeping authority given to participating countries to seize information from private parties as they investigate cybercrimes, even when the activity being investigated isn't a crime in the country where the data is located. If France is investigating a sale of Nazi memorabilia on eBay, the U.S. must cooperate, even though such transactions are not illegal in the U.S.

Telecommunications companies object to provisions that require member countries to establish and enforce potent data-retention policies for network traffic, and require any operator of a computer network to respond to requests for information from any participating country without compensation of any kind.

These are potentially serious problems, especially given that the Convention is open to any country that wants to join. But there are more practical reasons U.S. businesses should be concerned. The provisions for data retention and production apply to any operator of a computer network, not just telecoms. Worse, Article 12 attaches liability to businesses for "lack of supervision or control" of employees who commit criminal offenses covered by the Convention. Businesses must worry about employee activities that may be legal here, but illegal elsewhere, risking administrative, civil, or even criminal penalties.

These investigative and supervision costs will invariably be imposed on businesses without any real controls. Worldwide law-enforcement agencies, in other words, may now avail themselves of the opportunity to outsource their most expensive problems to you.

The Convention may improve the cybercrime-and-punishment equation in favor of deterrence. But it's also added some new variables and possibly irrational numbers. Of the economic, not



from: <http://www.xkcd.net/>
A webcomic of romance, sarcasm, math, and language.

The RjX-21 uses the iSync protocol with Bluetooth technology to program the 180 grain, 30 caliber homing projectile. There's no longer any reason to miss a loved one just because he moves.

from: David Titus
<bullyt@mac.com>

If you want a quick list of the shortcut keys try this Apple document entitled **Mac OS X keyboard shortcuts**: <http://docs.info.apple.com/article.html?artnum=75459>

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Any trace of organization in these paragraphs is entirely coincidental

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Hope for the new year

What would we do without **tabloid TV, otherwise known as “news”**?

The airwaves have forgotten war, pestilence and destruction from weather to keep us informed up to the minute with “the latest” on the death of Anna Nicole Smith. It’s hard to imagine a more important issue confronting America.

I’ve lately been trying to communicate with some past members of ABCC who’ve dropped out. So far, 100% of them have expressed that the group is just too technical for them. Unfortunately, if D-Wave Systems has their way, **computing is going to soon get much more complex**. These guys have a “sold out” audience for their first public demonstration of a “commercial quantum computer” (assuming that their web site’s not lying, you can still sign up to see the demo over the ‘Net—I can wait). The big idea behind quantum computing is that so called qubits take on all possible states all the time and that networks of qubits can instantly try all possible combinations of inputs to arrive at a result. This is unlike digital computers which must test each combination of inputs one at a time. The mathematics of our current computers is all about producing well defined, definite results. The mathematics of quantum computing is all about statistics.

Perhaps you can recall the furor over SCO Group suing IBM, Red Hat, AutoZone and DaimlerChrysler, etc.

for copyright infringement over their use of Linux. Not that the suits were the main issue. Rather it was what they might mean to the open source software community if they’d been upheld (not really a closed issue yet). **And that impacts even Mac users.** The underpinnings of Mac OS X have their roots in Unix. Had SCO any real products, their position might not have been so ... ah ... ludicrous. But their only “product” seems to be a mean, greedy spirit. Now that they’ve hemorrhaged huge amounts of cash (largely obtained from Micro\$hapht) attempting to bludgeon others with their lawyers, Novell is suing SCO to obtain the license money that has been paid to SCO by others, as they apparently contracted to do. While this seems like a “good” thing for open source, I have my doubts. Novell is currently in league with Micro\$hapht and destroying SCO will most likely end up with whatever copyright SCO holds moving to their creditor.

Git along little bot-tie. It’s your misfortune ... Yes, yours and mine. Unlike the doggie herding cowboy of old, the cybercowboys are herding bots—computers that have been compromised. The herds are referred to as “botnets” and the cowboys as “crackers”. Crackers sell or rent their botnets to “fraudsters”. Fees run about \$1 per bot per month but can run as much as \$100 if the bots are “right”—generally containing data of high direct value. Supposedly, the market in “crime-ware”; the software tools to create and use bots and botnets and the botnets themselves is a multibillion dollar annual market.

“Bwa-ha-ha-ha-ha! Your Dec. 4 cover of Steve Ballmer makes him look positively sinister. I understand that Mr. Ballmer is an executive in a major corporation and not a fashion model, but please try to find a picture that doesn’t make him look like he’s planning something diabolical.

Oh, wait, the issue was about Windows Vista. Never mind. -- Ray Beesh”

Well, **you can forget about paltry gigabyte hard drives.** They will be fading fast. Well, maybe not quite yet but you can now buy an actual single terabyte drive (1 terabyte = 1,024 gigabytes in computerese). This first one comes from Hitachi. Seagate is near to releasing one as well. Unlike the Hitachi, which is a study in cramming mechanics into a box, the Seagate unit is expected to use developing technology and not be so crammed full of stuff.

Evidence presented during a week-long trial convicted Jeffrey Brett Goodin, 45, of Azusa, CA of using several compromised Earthlink accounts to send spam urging people to update their AOL billing information or risk losing service and referring them to one of a list of Web pages where they were directed to input their personal and financial information which were used to make charges against peoples’ accounts. U.S. District Court Judge Christina A. Snyder could sentence Goodin to a maximum of 101 years in federal prison. Well ... got one, anyway. **Wonder how much he stole.**

NASA is working to put up another space telescope; the James Webb. The development of James Webb is an international contracting effort, so NASA is using UML (Unified Modeling Language) in an effort to avoid things like the grinding of Hubble’s mirror to the wrong specification. I studied a UML a bit. Like so many things that happen with computers, **it struck me as a horrendous solution to problems almost no one has.** For example, much was made of the huge cost of “fixing” Hubble ... which I believe should not have been done. But my approach only works when rational approaches are taken to developing such things. The big cost **5 -->**

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of building one Hubble is not doubled when one makes two. Indeed, I'd have made at least ten. We could have corrected Hubble Number One's problem in Hubble Number Two and simply launched it. Even better, when we found that having half a dozen Hubbles would be a very good thing, we'd have been able to launch them too. But this stuff is political. As we all know, **political money and real cost have little to do with one another.**

Speaking of things NASA, back at Goddard Space Flight Center (where the rusting hulks of old spacecraft sink into the ground "out back") **they're hard at work making flexible "skin"** that contains sensors for physical parameters. Largely a result of nano-technology for the sensors and "printed" electronics, these sheets of material can be applied to things like robots to give them an ability to "feel" things. If we ever get really good at hooking up nerves to non-biological mechanisms, we may be able to use this sort of thing to replace real skin or function as a retina in an eye blinded by things like macular degeneration.

I'm interested in the movement of the Eudora e-mail client to an open source project. Since I dabble a bit with compiling such things myself, especially compiling them to work on older systems, I thought I'd check out the requirements for Penelope (the name being used for the Mozilla based project to rewrite Eudora—while Qualcomm no longer cares to supply Eudora, they apparently are keeping the trademark). What a nightmare! Thanks to Apple and GNU and whomever else mucks the melange of compilers and associated development software, the roadmap of what works with what is anything but reasonably comprehensible. I fear this is to become the lot of open source in general. Everything is getting more and more complex at what seems an exponential rate. **One now must spend more than 24 hours per day just to keep up.** True democ-

racy in action.

Samsung is sampling 16 Gb (giga-bit) NAND Flash chips ... you know; the stuff inside memory "cards" you shove into your camera or "USB thumb drives" you carry in your pocket. While this number of bits per chip is not exactly new, it is when it's done with 50 nanometer features. Despite the small features, chip yield should be good as they don't have to be perfect to be useful in many applications. This is because the defects can be worked around using the same sort of techniques that are used to make modern disk drives "fail softly". Indeed, such chips are the sort of thing a "solid state disk" is likely to be made of. If these sorts of chips get cheap enough, they could replace mechanical hard disks for most people's computers. They're already more than adequate to function as hard disks for things like a Mac G3 (they came with 4 GB hard drives—two chips' worth). **It'd be interesting to make a hand held "Mac Plus" that ran on a couple of pen light batteries or maybe a Hci in a camera phone.**

Hmmm... interesting to encounter a note about something referred to as "**Phase Change Memory**", announced by developers at IBM, that may well be a replacement for Flash memory. In fact, if what I read is the case, it could easily serve as the only memory a system might need. It's fast; about 10 nanoseconds to write. It's low power. It should be comparatively dense, ie. lot's more bits should fit on a chip than with some other approaches. About all that's left is that it should be cheap and support an unlimited number of writes. The first is mostly a matter of business politics. The latter is less certain, though it seems like it should be feasible. I must admit, though, that my researches of other articles on the subject found them decrying the nominal 100K write cycle limit for Flash but curiously lacking a direct statement of the write longevity of the process.

Federal government agencies have

been handed a mandate to have their networks IPv6 compatible by sometime in 2008, ie. just around the planet's next orbit. Most of us probably have little notion of what IPv6 is or, for the matter, what IPv4 is. It all has to do with giving everything on the Internet a unique number so our computers can keep track of which computers they're talking with. IPv4 uses 32-bit addresses for computers. You see these as "dotted quads"—four decimal numbers, each in the range 0 to 255, separated by periods, like 127.0.0.1. IPv4 only allows about four billion "real" addresses. In other words, not nearly enough in a world where six billion people have computers. IPv6 uses 128 bit addresses—enough for roughly 340 trillion trillion computers. This should keep us in addresses for quite some time. But addressing on the network is only a small part of the problem in switching from IPv4 to IPv6. The programs we use to communicate over the Internet need to be upgraded to understand IPv6 and there are a lot of them. Some of this work has already been done. Most modern OSs (Operating Systems) support IPv6 already. Many of the common underlying "geek" programs have been IPv6 compatible for quite some time. But most programs are not. Then there's the networking infrastructure itself. **Very few ISPs provide IPv6 services.** While there are ways to "tunnel" IPv6 over IPv4 networks (I do this now), it's necessary for network operators to deal with IPv6 directly if it's going to work well. I've seen almost no evidence of any of them moving in that direction any time soon. Next time you talk with your ISP, ask them when they plan to carry IPv6 traffic.

According to InfoWorld's Robert X. Cringely, "If being out of touch with reality is a requirement for holding high office, Bill Gates must be running for president. In a recent interview with Newsweek, Gates said, 'Nowadays, security guys break the Mac every single day. ... I dare

<--Water Blogged Wump

anybody to do that once a month on a Windows machine.” Well, if those security guys would quit running over Macs with a truck, they might last longer.

Sometimes it’s unsettling to have a brain. PBS recently aired a program about the state of journalism. The Los Angeles Times was used as a specific situation to illustrate their thesis, central to which is that the owners of the corporations have no interest in news, concerning themselves with the stock price of the corporation instead. They claimed that **the L. A. Times was turning a 20% profit ... but this wasn’t good enough.** They had to make cut backs to raise the profit margin and increase the stock price. It’s an old story, happening in almost any venue that the bean counters plant their magic beans. Brain? Yeah. I got to thinking about the inevitable outcome of the bean stock growing. It does so by sucking the life out of the business it grows in. The business executives claim this is necessary to keep the stock price up. I guess stockholders are thrilled ... until there’s not enough real business left to convince anyone that function, much less profit, can be realized. By this time, of course, the executives will all have cashed in, divesting themselves of all but a token amount of highly over valued stock, carefully withdrawing from the corporation before the remaining stockholders start suing. This is all legal. But, it seems like little more than a kind of bait and switch scam with overtones of Ponzi scheme thrown in for good measure.

Speaking of sucking the life out of businesses ... I recently tried sending an e-mail to someone whom I’ve been routinely sending e-mails for quite some time. But now the e-mail bounced, returning messages from some intermediary about misconfiguration of something difficult to discern but written as though it was somehow my fault. I have a couple of

other paths through with I can send e-mail and tried using one of them. It also failed but since I used my own server, the bounce message was much more direct, indicating that the misconfiguration was at the receiving site. Being inclined to help, I got onto the Web, looked up the receiver’s ISP’s customer support number and called to tell them about the problem they had. Of course, I got an automated menu which eventually led me to a bored lady who was, perhaps, not quite completely indifferent to what I was trying to tell her, insisting on asking me numerous irrelevant questions, most probably because her management demanded filled out reports on every call by filling out a form on a computer. Ah, the joys of outsourcing!

I just heard a news report about **Girl Scout cookies.** A simple computation on the data presented pointed out that they are a billion dollar annual business.

It just goes to prove how old I am but **I can recall the Carterfone decision.** If you were around before 1968, you may still recall that virtually all telephones

Eudora Going Open Source

by Walt Pawley <walt@wump.org>

Yes, Virginia, Eudora is still seeping over to a Mozilla open source project. Or, at least its future is. The project is named Penelope. As yet, no end user results seem to have been produced. So, if you’re like me (and I know at least a few of you have been paddling the same boat), you’ll probably want to “upgrade” to Eudora 6.2.4, which is supposedly the only version that won’t revert to “Light mode” ... probably by the time this is published.

But even so, there are issues.

Take my activities, for example. I have a **cron** controlled check for email every hour. Why, when Eudora has an option to check on an interval? Two reasons: I wanted it at a particular point in the hour and Eudora’s interval processes; **cron**’s doesn’t. This broke under 6.2.4 whereas

were leased from AT&T ... period. Moreover, you could not move them without paying for it. AT&T owned the telephone lines, etc., *in your house.* Skype (owned by eBay) petitioned the FCC to open cell phone systems citing the Carterfone suit of AT&T. This could be immense. After all, Carterfone won. Skype might not, since competing cell phone towers sit side by side all over. It would be amazing if it not only “opened” cell phones but forced them to be interoperable. Competition, our developed investment environment will support, may be OK for some things but not for infrastructure deployment.

You’d think that Walmart would be able to do Linux by themselves. After all, **they’re touted as being the best at being cheap** and not just by their ad execs. But Walmart has decided to get their Linux through Novell—not a good sign for the future of open source. About the only reason I can see for Walmart paying for licenses to Linux is to avoid litigation from Novell ... which has about as much right to Linux fees as I do. They have deep (Micro\$hapht’s) pockets to bludgeon competitors out of existence.

it had worked for years under 5.2.1b. The alert that mail had come in locks up 6.2.4. Turning it off “fixed” the problem.

Eudora versions don’t shock the upgrader really badly for the most part. That very fact can make changes more of a shock when you finally figure out what’s going on. I recently had an email come in that defied my ability fathom what it was about. A new feature of Eudora had displayed the message in a collapsed form so almost all of the message was missing ... or so it seemed. Simply clicking the right **Settings...** check box that I’d not known existed returned Eudora’s behavior to what I was expecting.

Eudora’s been a good program. I hope Penelope results in one that does at least as well.

That Bane of the Macintosh User

Recently I got a phone call from someone helping someone else change ISPs and



also update their version of Eudora. They wanted to know if their plan was OK. The only thing I had to suggest was that it would be prudent to make ZIP archives of both the old Eudora application and the Documents/Eudora Folder. Some minutes

later, I got another phone call. The “Create Archive of ...” function was missing from the Finder; it was X.2.x, ie. Jaguar. It turned out that there was a thumb drive with enough room on it to handle the backup without compression. He could also have recorded the data to a CD. No problem.

But this got me to thinking. There should be a means of doing this that didn’t mess up the files. Here’s the problem: HFS and HFS+ files support a whole bunch of “extensions” which don’t go along for the ride when standard *nix file tools are used on them. For example, only the data fork of files are compressed by **gzip**. On later systems, one can simply hold down

the Control key, click on an icon for a folder, choose “Create Archive of -the folder name-” and get a ZIP archive that can be used to recreate the folder almost perfectly (there are a couple of generally minor things that you’re unlikely to bump into that don’t go along even here). Apple has been attempting to “upgrade” their version of the standard *nix tools so they can carry the extensions but this only applies to the most recent versions of Mac OS X. Sadly, the way they’ve chosen to implement these “upgrades” isn’t something that’s readily transferred back to older systems. Still, there are things you can do. Here’s an example.

```
~ wump$ du -sk Documents/Eudora\ Folder/  
153404 Documents/Eudora Folder/  
~ wump$ hdiutil create /Volumes/zhd2/eudoradat -size 200m -type SPARSE \  
-fs HFS+ -volname MarchBackUp  
~ wump$ hdiutil mount /Volumes/zhd2/eudoradat.sparseimage  
/dev/disk2          Apple_partition_scheme  
/dev/disk2s1       Apple_partition_map  
/dev/disk2s2       Apple_HFS                /Volumes/MarchBackUp  
~ wump$ ditto -v -rsrcFork Documents/Eudora\ Folder /Volumes/MarchBackUp  
~ wump$ hdiutil detach /dev/disk2s2  
~ wump$ gzip /Volumes/zhd2/eudoradat.sparseimage  
~ wump$ du -sk /Volumes/zhd2/eudoradat.sparseimage.gz  
56560 /Volumes/zhd2/eudoradat.sparseimage.gz
```

Looking at all that gibberish can make one’s eyes glaze over really quickly. It’s not so tough when you break it down into little pieces, though. First we need an upper bound on the size of the data involved. The **du -sk** tells us there’s **153,404** K of e-mail data. Then the **hdiutil create** makes an image file that can grow to 200 M. At this point, we could revert to the GUI (Graphic User Interface) and mouse things by double-clicking the image file, dragging the Eudora Folder to the image’s window and then dumping the mounted image icon in the Trash. But we’d need to come back to CLI (Command Line Interface) to compress the result, so let’s stay with the CLI.

The **hdiutil mount** command does pretty much the same thing as double-clicking the image file’s icon. Note that the mount command outputs

three lines, one of which contains **/dev/disk2**. You’ll need that name to unmount/detach the volume later. The **ditto** command copies the Eudora Folder. Using **ditto** with the **-rsrcFork** option keeps the necessary extension data intact. When the done **ditto**-ing, the image file’s volume is dismounted with the **hdiutil detach** command. If you check the image file’s size at this point, it will be about the same as the data written to it, not the 200 M you said it could grow to. Since e-mail data tends to be largely text, it’s highly compressible. I chose to compress with **gzip**. You can see from the result of the **du -sk** command, this resulted in about three-to-one savings.

Here’s the good part, this file can be used to reconstitute a working copy of the Eudora Folder in the event something goes wrong with your upgrade

process. I suppose it’s worth pointing out that this process could be adapted to backup both the application and the user data in the same image. Indeed, the **ditto** command is capable of making excellent back-ups of data to volumes you can mount either from image files or removable media like FireWire hard disks.

All that looks like a huge amount of typing to do. But it’s really not too bad ... *if* you use the help that Terminal and Finder provide. For example: to get **Documents/Eudora\ Folder/** typed, just hit “Do<tab>Eu<tab>”. You can use this to get to anything that’s already on your mounted storage media (ie. your hard disk, etc.). Or, you might have the **Documents** folder open so you could grab the **Eudora Folder** and drop it on the Terminal window.

Terry Cooper recently sent me **8 -->**

←-- Dread Terminal

a an email with the claim “Daylight saving time update released for Mac OS X 10.4.8, 10.3.9”. He asked that I let you know about it if you wanted to install it. But the “gotcha” is in the numbers for at least some of us. It certainly is for me. I have a number of Macs, mostly old beaters, only one of which could use their updater (it’s running 10.3.9) if the version numbers are really restrictions.

I suppose Apple has some sort of reason for this apparent limited support (like twisting your arms into being compliant little sheep who can be tapped for funds periodically). Perhaps there’s even some obscure technical reason, though my researches into the matter make that hard for me to believe.

For example, in my ignorance of the details of the time-zone handling that’s done in *nix (short for the collection of Unix, Linux, the BSDs, Solaris and who knows how many other highly related operating systems) I had imagined that things like Daylight Savings Time were handled by dissemination of the intelligence involved from the time servers. Like so many things that make sense to me, that’s not how it’s done. Instead, there’s a data base that’s sitting in a folder you’ll likely never look at on your computer.

If you’re willing to play with Terminal, there are a couple of handy programs available to work with this data. To see what’s in a time zone information file, you can use the **zdump** program (**zdump -v /etc/localtime** gives you a list of the rules for your time zone, probably from 1901 through 2038).

Then there’s the **zic** program (Zone Info Compiler) which can be used to compile primary time zone data into the stuff your computer uses to run its time functions (**/etc/localtime** which is really a link to the actual file that was picked out when you used the Date & Time preference panel to

set your time zone). Apparently, this primary data is maintained at **ftp://elsie.nci.nih.gov/pub/** which doesn’t have a lot files but does seem to have the ones needed.

I found a web page that described how to use this data. It was almost correct. I did have to “read between the lines” a bit. Unless you have to use such techniques, I’d suggest using the method for your system(s) available at **http://www.afp548.com/article.php?story=20070128143720897** which are a bit easier to deal with than **zic** and aren’t so dependent on the exact OS version you’re running as Apple’s seem to be.


Since writing the previous paragraph, I’ve attempted to use these programs. Unfortunately, they, too, suffer from the version updating that goes on at NIH. The scripts have this line

```
OLSON=2007a
```

which sets the version of the data to be used. Unfortunately, when I did my first experiment, NIH was at 2007b which switched to 2007c by the time I ran the **afp548** scripts. So, I put together this little replacement for the above line

```
OLSON=`curl -s ftp://elsie.nci.nih.gov/pub/|perl -ne '/tzdata(.....)/&& print "$1\n"' -`
```

It’s a bit more complex but that’s to be expected when dealing with data that’s shifting around under your feet. What the change does is get the current version from the site itself before attempting to make use of it. Here’s how ...

First, the stuff between back-ticks (`...`) is a kind of sub-program which returns what it computes as the stuff to put into the **OLSON** variable. The stuff starts with a **curl** command which downloads the directory listing of the FTP site directory of interest at NIH. This listing is piped (the **|**) to a **perl** command which looks for the set of letters **tzdata** followed by five characters ... the **(.....)** stuff. The fact that the five periods are in 

the parentheses means that whatever five letters it finds after the **tzdata** become the value of **\$1**. When the **print** is executed, its output is the value to put into **OLSON**.

Finally, here’s a quote from a recent email I received, “I just used Terminal **strings** command to access a Ready-Set-Go file ... created several years ago. As you know, it worked great!” Well, I didn’t know but I would have suggested it. The **strings** command reads through a file, outputting snippets that it thinks might be text strings. This can be very useful when you’re confronted with some file created in a program you don’t have. While it doesn’t retain any formatting or fonts, it can often write the words to the Terminal window, from whence they can be copied & pasted, selected & saved, etc. Check out the **strings** “man page” (type **man strings** in Terminal) for details. It’s short and simple.

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