



News You Can Use

NEWS

SAVING YOUR INK

I've noticed that several people print the newsletter. All that blue area looked nice, but it really wasted ink!

I've lightened up the dark areas, which should save a lot of ink.

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QUICK TIP

THINGS NOT TO MOVE

Most OS X users are set up to have *administrator privileges*, which let you do good things like change system settings and install software.

You can get into trouble if you move important files or folders; you can sometimes do so without being stopped—because you're an "admin." Here's a quick list of what *not* to do:

- Don't move System, Library, Applications, or Users. Don't move any of their contents around, either.
- Don't drag programs from Applications to another folder or to the desktop. Instead, drag the program's icon *to the Dock*, which will create a shortcut in the Dock.

EARTHLINK SHMERTHLINK

JEarthlink has been sending out CDs claiming your software is outdated. Ignore them; you have everything you need.

I recently removed their accelerator software to get the web *working* again on a Panther system.

You Never Know _____ **all**

Keep Those Original Discs

Make sure you don't lose the original CDs or DVDs that came with your computer. There may come a time when it's necessary to restore the OS from them.

I recently replaced the hard drive in a PowerBook G4 computer, but when I installed a "standard" copy of MacOS 9.2.2, the computer said it lacked the software to properly sleep. The owner hasn't yet found the original CDs, and I'm trying to find an alternate source. Those CDs can't be downloaded from Apple's web site either.

The Inevitable _____ **all**

Rate Increase

Much as I hate to say it, my hourly rate is going to increase, effective January 1. For three years, I've been able to hold the \$45 hourly rate, but for 2006 it will go up to \$52.

Naturally, I'll always try to keep your costs low by solving your problems quickly and efficiently, and I still don't charge for travel time or expenses. Telephone support will still remain at the same rate: it's usually free, or \$25/hour if it takes more than a half-hour.

Thank you to all who have provided referrals!

Those That Have And Those That Will _____ **all**

Hard Drive Failures

After replacing another laptop hard drive recently, I reviewed my records to see just how many replacements I've seen. In three years, I've replaced 16 bad hard drives. Of those, eight were completely dead, two were very bad, and six gave an early warning of impending failure. One died because of nearby magnet. *More than half of these failures happened in 2005.*

I'll be giving a presentation at the Cambria Computer Club about hard drive failures, covering what's written here. The meeting is at 2pm on January 26th at the Joslyn Center.

The Statistics

Eight of the 16 drives were completely dead: it was impossible to recover any files from them at all. A couple of these just came up dead after the computers had been turned off for months. *Five*

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THE FINE PRINT**THE PRICE LIST**

Standard Rate is \$45/hr. **Note:**
Effective Jan 1, 2006, hourly
rate will be \$52.

Apple Remote Desktop help is billed at the reduced rate of \$35/hr.

Phone support is free, except if the call runs to a half hour. Then it's billed at the further-reduced rate of \$25/hr.

Email support is always free. Ask your questions and you'll get an answer, usually within a few hours.

Invoices are mailed on the first of each month, covering charges incurred during the prior month. (So, for example, you'll be billed on May 1st for work done in April.)

New Clients receive a one-time half hour discount !

WHAT'S IMPORTANT

Solving your problem the *right* way, as much as humanly possible.

Not making things worse.

Some support folks try to fix one problem and end up creating new ones. Where does that leave you?

Keeping your costs down. It's more important to provide good service than to squeeze out a few more bucks. When you see a "comp" item on an invoice, it's my way of helping to keep your costs low.

of the failures were caught early, when there were warning sounds. On these drives, it was possible to recover virtually all files, with only a few losses. The last few were in very bad shape, but it was still possible to recover many files. I don't know whether they gave warning sounds before getting bad.

In a data-recovery situation, however, there's no telling whether we'll get all the files, or which ones were already destroyed.

Laptops vs. Desktops

My stats show the score is 9 laptops and 7 desktops. Does this mean laptops are more prone to fail? Possibly, because the drives are tiny, they suffer bumps as the computer is moved, and they may run hotter than desktop drives. Laptops run hot and cold, whereas desktop temps stay fairly constant.

But it could also be because there are more laptops in use.

Old Age

Hard drives last about three to five years. We're seeing some of the older ones give up the ghost. On a laptop, life span may be two to four years.

Modern drives are built to be smaller, lighter, and cheaper—factors that may cut into reliability. Some manufacturers just had bad years for certain models, though it's very hard to track whether a particular drive is part of a bad batch.

Watch For Failure Warnings

When you're aware of an impending failure, there's still time to get all your files off the computer and install a replacement drive. We want to be able to *predict* the failure in time to avoid losing data.

Listen For Noises

A healthy drive may make a whirring sound as it spins, and there may be soft rattling or clicking sounds as you access your files. These clicks are made as the disk head moves back and forth across the disk.

If the drive begins to develop bad areas, it works harder to read and write data. The result is an increase in the head noises. You may hear buzzing sounds as the head moves back and forth, trying many times to read data.

Occasionally, a failing drive slams the head against the mechanical "stop," trying to realign itself. This sounds like a snap, a loud click, or like a marble being dropped.

If you start hearing these abnormal sounds, ask for help.

Watch For Stalls

As a drive begins having trouble reading data, it often *stalls* for as long as 30 seconds, then it finally gets the data. The computer

will become mostly unresponsive during this time, often displaying a spinning color wheel (or the wristwatch on MacOS 9). You can still move the mouse, but one or more programs just won't respond. After the stall, the system continues normal operation as if nothing had happened. Depending on where the bad spot is, you may see these stalls quite often.

This is also a warning sign that the drive will fail.

We'd Been Waiting For The Shoe To Drop_____ all

Microsoft Makes It Official

From the Microsoft web site:

"In June 2003, the Microsoft Macintosh Business Unit announced that Internet Explorer for Mac would undergo no further development, and support would cease in 2005. In accordance with published support lifecycle policies, **Microsoft will end support for Internet Explorer for Mac on December 31st, 2005**, and will provide no further security or performance updates.

"Additionally, **as of January 31st, 2006, Internet Explorer for the Mac will no longer be available for download** from Mactopia. It is recommended that Macintosh users migrate to more recent web browsing technologies such as Apple's Safari." [the **bold** emphasis is mine]

So they've made it official. Adios to I.E. for Mac users. As long as the current release still works, it's a good third option after Safari and Firefox. When it starts breaking, show it the door.