The GAB'er

The Newsletter of the Greater Albany Apple Byters

Apple Building Cash Reserves for 'Big, Bold' Moves
by Eric Slivka

Bloomberg reports on comments from Apple CEO Steve Jobs out of the company's shareholders meeting today regarding Apple's growing war chest of cash and the company's plans for it in the face of questions from shareholders. According to Jobs, Apple is building its reserves for future investments that would be calculated to return significant value rather than simply returning the money to shareholders.

Apple Inc. Chief Executive Officer Steve Jobs said he prefers having cash for investments to paying dividends or doing stock buybacks.

Apple is holding onto cash to take "big, bold" risks, Jobs said at the company's shareholder meeting today. The company had about $25 billion in cash and short-term investments as of December.

Apple Chief Operating Officer Tim Cook mentioned earlier this week at a Goldman Sachs conference that Apple has looked at large companies for acquisitions, but that none have been the right fit. Consequently, Apple has restricted itself to purchasing smaller companies, such as Quattro

Coordinator's Corner
by John Buckley

The March meeting will feature Cloud Computing and using Google Apps. This is what the future may hold for us and a way to save money, always a favorite with GAB'ers.

We will discuss the news from Apple including any new announcements from Apple. To find out what's happening, GAAB is the place to be. So be sure to be at our March meeting and every meeting to find out the best information about the Mac.

The March meeting will be held at St. Mary's Hospital in the Leonard Board Room on Wednesday, March 10, 2010. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. St. Mary's Hospital is located at 1300 Massachusetts Avenue in Troy NY.

However, the best route to take from the Northway is the following:
1. Merge onto NY-7 East from the Northway.
2. Follow Route 7 to Troy where it becomes Hoosick Street.
3. Turn left on Oakwood Avenue (10 Street/NY-40), which is the first light after the bridge and bare right.
4. Turn right on Sausse Avenue. Turn left onto Lindenwood Court. When you come to the first entrance to the hospital parking lot, turn left and park.

Next GAAB Meeting
March 10, 2010

Google Apps
7:00 p.m.

St. Mary's Hospital, Troy
Leonard Board Room

Serving the Apple Computer User Community Since May 1984

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Apple Ambassador

by John Buckley

Intel Core i3, i5, i7 laptop CPUs explained

After the introduction of the new iMacs with new processors from Intel, I became curious as to what these processors did and how they were better then the Core 2 Duo's that were in the "old" Quad-core power.

The available quad-core Intel Core i5 or Core i7 "Nehalem" processor in the 27-inch iMac puts four processing cores on one die, so data doesn't have to travel far to get from core to core. This boosts application performance up to 2x over the previous-generation iMac.[1] And unlike systems that connect memory to the processor through a separate controller, these quad-core processors connect memory directly to the processor, improving memory bandwidth up to 2.5x.[2]

Turbo Boost.

A quad-core iMac also benefits from Turbo Boost. If you're using an application that doesn't need every core, Turbo Boost shuts off the idle cores while simultaneously increasing the speed of the active ones.

Internet SIG

Turn Your iPhone into a Powerful Mobile Office
by Kim Komando

The time has come where you may no longer need to lug a laptop around to get work done. With about $50 worth of apps, you can turn your iPhone or iPod Touch into a true mobile powerhouse.

Brush up on a PowerPoint presentation. Catch up on all your email. Access important files stored on your desktop PC right on your phone. I have six great apps that will help you do this and more.

Documents to Go

Do a fair number of presentations or editing Microsoft Word or Excel files? Documents To Go ($10) is right up your alley. It lets you view, create and edit Word and Excel documents. The professional version ($15) adds PowerPoint support.

You can synchronize files with your Windows PC or Mac over Wi-Fi. Or, send and receive files via e-mail. You get a healthy set of features, but not all that are available in Office. Files sent from your desktop retain their formatting. You'll see graphics and tables, along with comments and footnotes/endnotes. The app can also be used to view PDFs and iWork '08 and '09 files.

TapIt4Me

The iPhone's keyboard can be difficult. You'll want TapIt4Me ($5) for composing documents or long e-mail messages.

Start by creating "snippets." A snippet consists of a phrase and an abbreviation. When you type the abbreviation, TapIt4Me replaces it with the phrase. For example, "brb" is expanded to "be right back."

Use the notes feature to compose a message. Expand a single abbreviation, or create an entire e-mail from several abbreviations. Then, copy and paste the note into another app. The app includes a number of snippets. You can edit, delete or keep any or all of them.

Print n Share for advanced printing

At some point, you'll want to print content stored on your iPhone. Print n Share for advanced printing ($7) lets you print files and Web pages. Or, print contacts, e-mail messages and photos.

Print n Share works with any printer available to your computer. You can print from your Wi-Fi network. Or, use your cellular connection to print from afar.

Carbonite

Access your online backup files on the go with Carbonite's iPhone app. (Full disclosure: Carbonite is one of my national radio show's sponsors.) The app is free, but you'll need to subscribe to Carbonite.

The way the app works is simple. Carbonite on your desktop backs up your files to Carbonite's servers. You can then access all of these files on your iPhone. View photos, brush up on a PowerPoint presentation or review documents.

The app also lets you e-mail files directly from your phone. That makes it easy to share and access files anywhere. Access your files over cellular and Wi-Fi networks.

scanR Business Center

scanR Business Center Pro ($25) turns your iPhone into a scanner and fax machine. Since it requires a camera, iPod Touch users won't reap its full benefits.

Use your iPhone's camera to scan documents, business cards and more. Then, convert them into PDF files. The PDFs are searchable, so you can search for specific text within finished files.

Education SIG

Cloud Computing: The Economic Imperative
Why this paradigm shift in IT isn't just lofty thinking
by Cara Erenben, eSchool News

I thought this article was very appropriate as we will be looking at Google Apps this month.

What is cloud computing? There is an amusing video on YouTube.com that tries to answer that very question.

The video's author, an employee of a cloud-computing company called Joyent Inc., asked that question to several top tech editors and CEOs at the Web 2.0 Expo last May and pieced together their responses in a short, comical video.

One interviewee quipped that cloud computing is when you're using your laptop in an airplane at 40,000 feet. The amusing, and rather telling, aspect of the video is that all the interview subjects said something different.

It seems cloud computing is still an abstraction. But the term itself isn't new. Anyone who has ever seen a network diagram has probably seen a cloud with arrows pointing to and from it. The cloud represents the network–either a local intranet, or the internet at large–and all the resources available on it. Instead of having software that is stored and run on an individual PC, the user taps into this "cloud" for his or her computing needs.

These days, cloud computing relates to the way IT professionals design, build, deploy, and run applications that operate in a virtualized environment.

"IT as a service…is what cloud computing is all about," said Hagen Wenzek, a senior strategist at IBM.

In the same way a utility company delivers electricity, natural gas, or water–you sign up, then don't have to think about it any more–cloud computing delivers IT services to the end user. Advocates of this service model say it's simpler, faster, and cheaper for organizations–and the experience for the end user is also superior.

Concepts such as on-demand resources, utility computing, virtualization, Software as a Service (SaaS), and Desktop as a Service are integral parts of cloud computing.

Characteristically, cloud computing is efficient, automated, and delivers standardized resources–all of which can result in significant cost savings. Several U.S. colleges, universities, and K-12 school districts are already reaping the benefits of switching to a cloud-computing model.

The current economic crisis in the United States and worldwide is pushing businesses and institutions to adopt this new way of running technology. In the private sector, spending on IT cloud services will grow almost threefold, reaching $42 billion by 2012, according to research firm IDC.

"The cloud model offers a much cheaper way for businesses to acquire and use IT," said Frank Gens, senior vice president and chief analyst at IDC, in a statement. "In an economic downturn, the appeal of that cost advantage will be greatly magnified."

The investment in technology infrastructure since the turn of the century is also driving the trend toward cloud computing: As school and business networks have become faster and more robust, the capacity to deliver software and IT services through these networks to users on demand has increased.

Moore's Law has borne out for so long that we've moved into an age of digital abundance, where the cost of technology devices for end users is fairly low, said Michael King, IBM's vice president of global education industry.

That fact has shifted IT managers' focus from the initial cost of purchasing technology to the total cost of ownership

(TCO) for operating and maintaining the technology, King said. What's important now to schools is, how much electricity will it consume? How many maintenance technicians will be needed?

"Cloud computing is ultimately going to enable a significant transformation of education to increase quality, increase access to educational resources, and at the same time lower costs. It's a very fundamental shift, on the order of the shift toward the PC computing model a couple of decades ago."

How it works

Cloud computing takes the complexity off the desktop–the software, operating system, and processing power–and moves it into the cloud, which is a central location.

The experience is transparent to the end user, who is not aware that the computing power is not coming from his or her desktop computer. The servers at the cloud center dole out whatever the user requests, whether it's the internet, software applications, his or her personal files, or even supercomputing capabilities.

There are multiple ways to implement cloud computing.

A school or institution can build and run its own data center to power the cloud on campus. Or, if the school can't afford a mainframe computer or large server farm, it can outsource that function to a hosting company and sign up for services delivered over the internet–eliminating the need to invest in robust hardware or install software

Kentucky's Pike County Schools subscribes to an outside company for server capacity, software, and IT services. North Carolina State University (NCSU) runs its own computing cloud on a server farm consisting of 2,000 blade computers from IBM. Marist College in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., runs cloud computing on a mainframe.

Cloud computing can be highly energy-efficient, Wenzek said. Because software runs in the "cloud," end users don't need powerful machines with lots of processing power or memory. And scaled-down machines use less energy than operating the equivalent number of desktop computers.

Efficiency also comes because a data center centralizes resources in just a few locations; the resources are standardized, meaning they consist of "like" components with the lowest possible number of variations, and the processes are automated.

On top of the servers in a cloud center, you install cloud management software, which does everything from configuring and rationing resources to authenticating users and cleaning up "dumb" terminals so the computers in a lab are ready for the next user.

Public and private clouds

Public computing clouds are open to anyone who wants to sign up and use them. Private clouds typically sit behind the firewall of an enterprise or university, and only people within that organization have permission to access the cloud and its resources.

"There's also something in the middle," Wenzek said. IBM, for example, operates a cloud data center for its customers. Multiple customers share the same infrastructure, but each customer's cloud is secure and separated as though behind its own firewall.

"It brings you the value of more efficiency," Wenzek said, "because we are able to share the same infrastructure with many other customers, and therefore it's more efficient. If you had your own small little cloud, [it] can never be as efficient as a huge pool of IT resources."

Simpler, faster, cheaper

Most students and faculty just want to use technology tools and resources; they don't care where these resources are located or who is delivering them. Cloud computing makes it easy for them to do so. Faculty members simply go to the web to request the IT services they need for themselves or their students. From a menu, they can choose the operating system, the software applications, and the server capacity they need, and then they can schedule this request to repeat for the entire semester, or as needed.

Often, when someone needs additional server capacity, it can take weeks or months to fulfill the request. You have to fill out procurement forms, place an order, wait for shipping, and then set up and configure the machine.

Cloud computing can fulfill that same request within minutes. It provides a highly scalable, near-instantaneous way to deliver computing power or resources on demand. You just go to the web, choose what you want from a menu of available services, and then that server is allocated as a virtual machine almost immediately.

Cost savings come from centralizing and standardizing computer resources and drawing less power. The simplicity of the system also results in less maintenance, especially if

cloud computing is outsourced. That means fewer IT staff members are needed.

Another advantage to cloud computing is being able to buy software licenses based on actual usage, not on the number of computers you have.

Typically, cloud computing supports all types of devices. It is operating system agnostic and supports open-source applications. In the case of Pike County Schools in Kentucky, the district used cloud computing to transform 1,400 old computers that were ready for surplus into fully functioning virtual machines. (See Pike County's story here.)

Instant supercomputing power, on demand

Most students and faculty are already familiar with public clouds, or consumer-based cloud services such as those offered by Amazon, Google, Adobe, Expedia, or Facebook. These clouds give users a login and access to specific software.

"Someone is giving you software, they are running all their own servers, you get an account, and those services are delivered to you. It's a very low-cost way for companies to deliver very high-valued services for you," Thirsk said.

Regulatory issues…and other concerns

Some state laws say it's necessary to keep certain data, such as health or employment records, inside a single jurisdiction. With a subscription-based cloud computing model, the user doesn't always know where the data center is located. Many data centers are being built in locations that offer the best return on investment.

A powerful, secure, and reliable data center and network are essential to the success of cloud computing. "There is a very important role for companies, IT departments, and the like to guarantee that experience, or else people will become disappointed," Wenzek said.

Cloud computing might not be the right solution for all schools. Some IT directors might have concerns about data security, while others might worry what will happen if they lose their network connection.

IBM's King says this latter concern is becoming less of an issue, however, as schools build redundancies into their network infrastructure.

Moving forward

King said the education community should consider leveraging public service clouds and build their own private cloud services to keep students and faculty engaged, to keep their institutions relevant, and to keep costs down.

Apple's Builds Cash Reserves
Continued from page 1.

Wireless and Lala Media, primarily for their technology and talent.

Cook noted that remaining focused on a relatively small number of products and making them the best they can be is key to Apple's strategy and that it would not simply acquire another company to boost its bottom line. A report last month, however, claimed that Apple is becoming more serious about corporate acquisitions in the wake of Google's acquisition of AdMob, a company Apple had been looking at purchasing itself.

In other news from the meeting, all seven members of Apple's Board of Directors, including Jobs, were re-elected by shareholders.

Internet SIG
Continued from page 3.

Once you scan a document, fax it to anyone around the world. Or, use a nearby fax machine as a printer. Faxing is free. Your scans and faxes are stored online. You can access them from any Web browser or iPhone. You can also convert scans to editable documents via scanR's site.

Dropbox

Dropbox (free) makes it easy to transfer files to your iPhone. It works with Dropbox's online service, which synchronizes files between computers. A 2-gigabyte account is free.

Access your Dropbox account on the go. View files and download them to your iPhone for offline viewing. Changes made on a computer are synchronized to your iPhone.

You can share links to your Dropbox files with others. Or, take photos and videos with your iPhone and upload them to Dropbox.

Apple Ambassador
Continued from page 2.

Built for more cores.

Mac OS X Snow Leopard is designed to take advantage of this advanced processor architecture, so every Intel processor reaches its full potential on iMac.

The Core i3 is the baby of the group, but don't let that fool you: it's a potent performer in its own right. Two flavors are available -- a 2.13GHz Core i3-330M and a 2.26GHz Core i3-350M, both of which are dual-core and have a 1,066MHz front-side bus that makes the most of 1,066MHz memory.

On the surface, it doesn't appear all that different to the standard Core 2 Duo range, but look deeper and you'll see the i3, like its i5 and i7 brethren, features Intel Hyper-Threading -- a technology that allows four-way multitask processing. Whereas each individual processor (or core) on models in the Core 2 Duo range could handle just one processing thread at a time, Hyper-Threading allows the Core i3 to run two processing threads simultaneously on each core -- allowing it to perform four things at once, instead of the usual two.

The Core i5 is the next step up on the ladder. The chips are fundamentally identical to the i3, but a wider variety of clock speeds are available, starting with the top-end 2.53GHz i5-540M. A couple of 2.4GHz options are available in the form of the i5-520M and i5-520E, both of which are identical aside from the i5-520E's support of error correction code (ECC) memory -- a type of RAM typically used in servers. Finally, Intel also provides a 1.06GHz Core i5-520UM processor, which is designed for ultraportable laptops.

It's worth noting that much of the time, Core i5 chips won't actually run at their core speeds -- they'll go even faster. This is thanks to a new feature known as Intel Turbo Boost -- a fancy system that automatically overclocks the processor to a faster frequency, provided it's running below its limits for peak power, current and temperature. The 2.53GHz i540M can run at up to 3.06GHz, while the 2.4GHz i5-520M will reach up to 2.93GHz. The low-voltage Core i5-520UM scales from 1.06GHz to a plucky 2.13GHz.

Core i7, the pumped-up, muscle-bound hunk of the range, really takes advantage of this particular feature. Its bottom-rung Core i7-820QM -- a chip designed for thin-and-light laptops -- can jump from 1.20GHz to a stonking 2.26GHz with Turbo Boost enabled. Most impressive of all though, are the Core i7-720QM and i7-820QM --- the only quad-core parts in the family. The former can leap from 1.6GHz up to 2.8GHz, while the latter goes from 1.73GHz up to a jaw-dropping 3.06GHz. If that's not enough for you, consider the gaming-oriented Core i7-920XM. This beast has a base frequency of 2GHz, but overclocks itself by 1.2GHz to reach a startling 3.2GHz.

Its all clever stuff, we think you'll agree, and hopefully it'll give you an approximate insight into how these new-fangled chips compare to one another and what sort of performance you can expect. As always, we're planning to give you full, hands-on reviews of laptops sporting these chips in the very near future, so keep your eyes peeled firmly in this direction.

These new chips should be appearing not only in the iMac, but probably in all of the Mac computer line.

A Little Bit of Humor

The following is a little bit of humor from Gizmodo with a look at what comes after the iPad.

Apple Drops the Hammer on Steamy Adult Apps, Again

by Andrew R Hickey, ChannelWeb

Apple has again said it will pull the plug on sultry and sometimes pornographic applications on the Apple iPhone and iPod Touch, removing sexually suggestive material from the Apple App Store.

In an interview with the New York Times one Apple executive said the apps are being removed due to user complaints.

"We were getting customer complaints from women who found the content getting to degrading and objectionable, as well as parents who were upset with what their kids were able to see," Phillip Schiller, senior vice president of worldwide product marketing, told The Times.

According to Apple, several apps have appeared recently full of suggestive photographs of women in various states of dress. The App Store has seen "an increasing number of apps containing very objectionable content," Schiller said.

A chart on AppShopper.com, a Web site that tracks the number of applications added and removed from Apple's App Store per day, shows that starting on February 18 Apple removed more than 6,000 App Store apps, 4,000 of which were removed in one day. While AppShopper.com doesn't specify which type of applications were purged from the iPhone App Store, the site writes that "the majority of the removals seem to be because of Apple's new policy to eliminate 'overtly sexual' apps."

Though Apple quickly deep-sixed thousands of sultry applications, critics wondered why other applications from major brands like Sports Illustrated and Playboy showing women in bikinis were allowed to stay. Schiller told The Times that those are well-known companies "with previously published material available broadly in a well-accepted format."

Apple is no stranger to removing objectionable and pornographic content from the App Store and for the iPhone and iPod Touch. Last year, Apple removed an application dubbed "Hottest Girls" when it was found that some of the images served by the app featured topless women. Apple said in a statement at the time that the application "was a direct violation of the terms of the iPhone Developer Program."

The "Hottest Girls" removal followed a couple of other high-profile application removals by apple, including the ill-fated "Me So Holy" application hat let users put other faces over an image of Jesus, and the "Babyshaker" game that showed a baby crying that would only quiet down after the user violently shook their iPhone.

Like the thousands of App Store apps purged by Apple in recent days, those applications were relegated to the graveyard for App Store rejects.

Industry analysts have said that Apple's choice to remove and disallow content it deems objectionable is firmly within its rights and is just one of many methods Apple users to protect its name and brand.

"At the end of the day, Apple has a brand to maintain," Piper Jaffray analyst Gene Munster told The Times. "And the bottom line is they want that image to be squeaky clean.

How the iPhone Could Reboot Education
by Brian X. Chen, Wired

How do you educate a generation of students eternally distracted by the internet, cellphones and video games? Easy. You enable them by handing out free iPhones — and then integrating the gadget into your curriculum.

That's the idea Abilene Christian University has to refresh classroom learning. Located in Texas, the private university just finished its first year of a pilot program, in which 1,000 freshman students had the choice between a free iPhone or an iPod Touch.

The initiative's goal was to explore how the always-connected iPhone might revolutionize the classroom experience with a dash of digital interactivity. Think web apps to turn in homework, look up campus maps, watch lecture podcasts and check class schedules and grades. For classroom participation, there's even polling software for Abilene students to digitally raise their hand.

The verdict? It's working quite well. 2,100 Abilene students, or 48 percent of the population, are now equipped with a free iPhone. Fully 97 percent of the faculty population has iPhones, too. The iPhone is aiding Abilene in giving students the information they need — when they want it, wherever they want it, said Bill Rankin, a professor of medieval studies who helped plan the initiative.

"It's kind of the TiVoing of education," Rankin said in a phone interview. "I watch it when I need it and in ways that I need it. And that makes a huge difference."

The traditional classroom, where an instructor assigns a textbook, is heading toward obsolescence. Why listen to a single source talk about a printed textbook that will inevitably be outdated in a few years? That setting seems stale and hopelessly limited when pitted against the internet, which opens a portal to a live stream of information provided by billions of minds.

"About five years ago my students stopped taking notes," Rankin said. "I asked, 'Why are you not taking notes?' And they said, 'Why would we take notes on that?.... I

can go to Wikipedia or go to Google, and I can get all the information I need."

Conversely, the problem with the internet is there's too much information, and it's difficult to determine which data is valuable.

These are the specific educational problems Abilene is targeting with the iPhone. Instead of standing in front of a classroom and talking for an hour, Rankin instructs his students to use their iPhones to look up relevant information on the fly. Then, the students can discuss the information they've found, and Rankin leads the dialogue by helping assess which sources are accurate and useful.

It's like a mashup of a 1960s teach-in with smartphone technology from the 2000s.

Each participating Abilene instructor is incorporating the iPhone differently into their curriculum. In some classrooms, professors project discussion questions onscreen in a PowerPoint presentation. Then, using polling software that Abilene coded for the iPhone, students can answer the questions anonymously by sending responses electronically with their iPhones. The software can also quickly quiz students to gauge whether they're understanding the lesson.

Most importantly, by allowing the students to participate in polls anonymously with the iPhone, it relieves them of any social pressure to appear intelligent in front of their peers. If they answer wrong, nobody will know who it was, ridding students of humiliation. And if students don't understand a lesson, they can ask the teacher to repeat it by simply tapping a button on the iPhone.

"Polling opens up new realms for people for discussion," said Tyler Sutphen, an ACU sophomore who has participated in the iPhone initiative for a year. "It's a lot more interactive for those who aren't as willing to jump up and throw out their answer in class. Instead, you push a button on the iPhone."

What's Next for iMac and Mac Pro?
MacOSRumors

Right now, the Core i7 iMac is the king of Apple's hill — and a growing dominant force in the market generally as its remarkable value equation becomes more widely understood, offering ~35% better performance than the i5 model (due to the lack of HyperThreading which allows two threads to run on each core, making the CPU considerably more efficient) for only $200 more. It even rivals and sometimes exceeds the performance of the Mac Pro by nature of its more advanced Lynnfield CPU which can "turbo" to higher clock speeds, up to 3.46GHz, than the Gainestown Xeon chips in the Pro when only 1 or 2 cores are active. Gaming is a perfect example of where this can be particularly beneficial.

Lynnfield also has other advantages, such as putting the PCI Express controller on the CPU. Though it only supports two DDR3 memory channels against Gainestown's three, this makes little difference for a quad-core computer and can be almost entirely negated by upgrading the iMac to DDR3-1333MHz memory (stock OEM RAM is 1066MHz, but 1333MHz RAM has been confirmed to work as long as it has CL7 timing).

Until the next generation of dual-chip-capable Core i7 "Nehalem" processors hits the market early next year with up to six cores per chip — making a 12-core/24-thread Mac Pro possible at a surprisingly reasonable price, with new features offering all of Lynnfield's advantages and then some — this disparity will continue to drive many consumers, even "pro" class power users, away from the Mac Pro. Few workloads really take full advantage of all eight cores/16 threads on the Pro, and the higher Turbo speeds of Lynnfield are generally more beneficial to real-world performance.

The quad iMacs even have socketed CPUs, allowing for future chip upgrades….something that had been the exclusive purview of the Mac Pro for some time.

So, when will we see Mac Pro updated with next-generation chips including six-core 32nm "Gulftown" processors? What else will be new about this 2010 Mac Pro, and when/how will the iMac next be updated to keep pace?

Although some of the juiciest Mac Pro reports are still under partial embargo — something we hope will change within the next month at the outside — and need further confirmation, we have compiled a short list of the key improvements anticipated in the 2010 Mac Pro:

*Will be among the first computers to ship with Gulftown "Core i9 Xeon 5600 Series" CPUs in Late Q1 2010 — current Apple roadmap posits announcement in March with second-generation Gainestown models shipping immediately and the Gulftown model(s) shipping in April with a slow ramp-up of volume. Other models are expected to ship with second-generation Gainestown chips.

*All models will employ triple-channel DDR3-1333 ECC memory, unless any models ship with non-Xeon desktop chips which would use non-ECC. This is up from DDR3-1066 in current models.

*New enclosure similar to prototypes reported on during the 2009 Pro development process by Rumors earlier this year; somewhat larger, new "corner handle" design, and many prototypes have featured the addition of beautiful anodized black aluminum panels which help differentiate the Pro from all the other "silver unibody" Macs while following the company's trend toward using more black design elements (most often seen in display edges currently).

*Quad-core/single-chip Gainestown 2G model at 2.93GHz. There has been rampant speculation about entry level Mac Pro models switching to desktop (Lynnfield, Bloomfield 2G) chips from the more expensive Gainestown Xeon versions, but so far we have been unable to confirm this despite hearing of Lynnfield-based prototypes — and there is no indication in Apple's roadmap documents either way; they only specify "Quad-Core Nehalem." Note that this is not the current Gainestown family, but an upcoming Q1 2010 revision. Pricing will be considerably lower.

*Eight-core/dual-chip Gainestown 2G models at 2.66, 2.93 and 3.33GHz with significantly reduced pricing.

*Twelve-core/dual-chip Gulftown at 3.06GHz for the high-end model. Pricing should be similar to the current high-end octo-core 2.93GHz model (around or just under $6,000).

*Graphics processor options to include: nVidia GT200 series (probably GT270), possible GT300. ATi Radeon 5970, and at long last, a dual-GPU model, the 5970X2(!).

*Storage options to include SSD solid-state drives. A built-in, front-mounted SD slot has also been mentioned as part of the new enclosure design and would probably sit between the two optical drive slots.

We'll have more details on Apple's entire Early 2010 desktop lineup soon, but here are a few tidbits on a modest Early 2010 iMac speed bump mentioned in the new roadmap documents Cupertino has put together in the past few weeks:

*Most likely shipping in March or April, though some sources suggest uncertainty over wholesale component cost curves could push this into May depending on market conditions.

*Core 2 models updated to "Clarkdale" Core i3 32-nanometer desktop CPUs at 2.93 and 3.06GHz with on-chip integrated graphics (replacing nVIDIA 9400). Clarkdale Core i3 adds HyperThreading (two cores, four threads) for a considerable performance bump of 30%+ but does not support Turbo.

*Lynnfield (quad core) models updated with a new 2.93GHz Core i7 model and optional SSD solid-state drives. Slight price cut to existing 2.66GHz Core i5 model.

*27-inch models available with optional Radeon 4870 graphics processor over existing 4850 for a significant (but not dramatic) performance bump. Rumors of a dual-GPU 4870X2 model are thus far unsubstantiated, and questionable due to heat problems.

*Addition of an eSATA external storage port on all models, which will dramatically improve bandwidth for external drives over Firewire 800. This will be part of eSATA adoption across the entire Mac line over the course of 2010.

Option-Click Menu Extras to Reveal Hidden Settings
macosxtips.co.uk

Menu extras are the little icon menus that live over on the right-hand side of your menu bar. Most people will probably have the Volume and Airport menus, but there are loads more that you can enable.

You can find 26 built in ones located in /System/Library/CoreServices/Menu Extras that you can just double-click to start. On top of this there are many more that come with applications (like Evernote, QuickSilver and Tweetie) and some that are small applications themselves (like Caffeine, F.lux and iStat menus).

If you have a lot of menu extras, you can rearrange them by holding the command key and dragging them around. To remove one, just hold command and drag it off the menu bar.

One not so well known trick is holding down the Option key when clicking on the menus. For some of them this will reveal hidden settings and information that aren't normally shown in the menu. Here's what you'll see in the Option-click menu for some of the most common ones.

AirPort

In Snow Leopard the Airport menu has already got a lot more informative with the new way the icon displays the current status. In the Option-click menu you'll see a lot of extra information about your current wireless network, including the protocol (e.g. 802.11n), the signal strength (RSSI), security mode (e.g. WPA2 Personal), the channel (e.g. 11) and some other things like the hardware address and the transmit rate. If you want to get some of this information about another wireless network in the list that you aren't using, just hold your mouse over it and a yellow tooltip will appear.
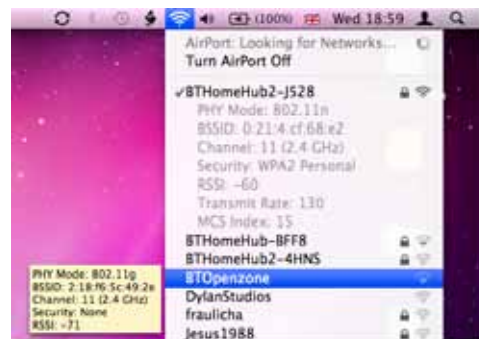
Volume

This menu normally just shows a slider for you to adjust the volume, but option-clicking shows some settings that you can normally change in the Sound section of System Preferences. It allows you to select different input and output devices, such as an external microphone or external speakers.


Bluetooth

If you have Bluetooth on your Mac, option-clicking the menu will show you the bluetooth version number. If you have the developer tools installed, it will also give you options to open Bluetooth Explorer and Packetlogger.
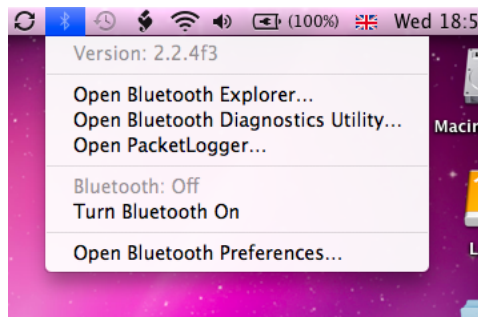

Battery

This one is just for laptop users. Option-clicking will add an item at the top of the menu that displays the condition of your battery. Clicking on this will open up a help page explaining what your condition means. You can find out more information about your battery here.
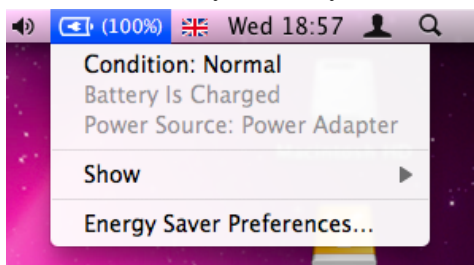

iSync/MobileMe

A normal click on this menu gives the time of the last sync, but option-clicking gives a huge list of the last time each individual data type was synced (i.e. Bookmarks, Calendars, Contacts etc.). It also adds in an option to open Sync Diagnostics and iSync, as well as giving the option to reset sync services.
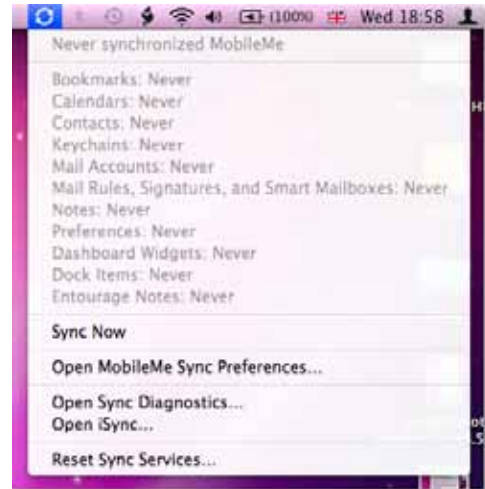
Time Machine

In this one, Option-clicking changes "Enter Time Machine" to "Browse Other Time Machine Disks". This brings up a dialog listing all the connected drives that contain Time Machine backups. Select one and click Use Selected Disk to browse the Time Machine backup.
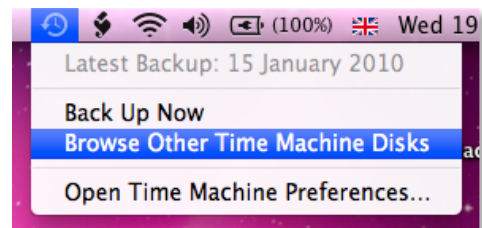
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