



BMUG PDF enewsletter

April 07

committee

Ron Begg, President
Dick Brown, Vice Pres.
Steve Craddock, Sec.
Graeme May, Treas.
Margaret Boyles
David Dixon
Don Patrick

our email addresses
are on the website...

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April meeting — 18 April — iChat & Mail

Note the changed date! Our April meeting has unfortunately needed to be re-scheduled, so as to make our room available for School Holiday activities.

We will be presenting a fun workshop on iChat. This simple, free application enables anyone with broadband to carry out free video calls world-wide. All members should be using iChat — it's really exciting!

Dick will also present his last Mail talk, wrapping up all the details of getting the most out of this everyday piece of software.

As always, there will be plenty of time for trouble-shooting and questions, and we also invite members with laptops to bring them along, so we can help with any queries or difficulties you might have right on your own machine.

March meeting

Dick continued his presentation on Mail, this time focussing on attachments, particularly images. The club is now selling inexpensive CD copies of all his excellent Mail slideshow presentations.

This was followed by Don's fascinating discussion of the most practical ways to backup your essential data. Many members went away determined to follow his excellent advice and begin backing up properly.

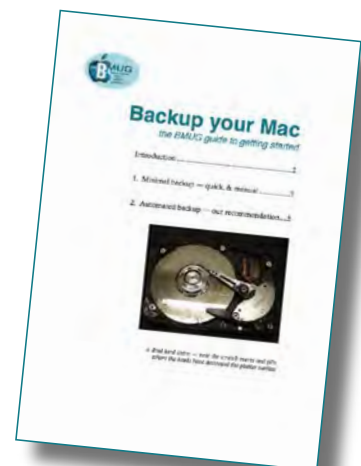
If you want to know more, buy a copy of our newly written BMUG manual, *Backup your Mac*.

Having trouble reading this page? Make it bigger in Preview with



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[email BMUG](#)





Members WANTED

We are always looking for new members. How about bringing a friend along?

And now that BMUG has a number of member benefits to offer even if people are unable to actually attend meetings, we are keen to recruit *virtual members*, who participate from remote locations. Our first virtual members were signed up over January. Do you have Macintosh friend who lives elsewhere, perhaps even interstate? Encourage them to join and take advantage of the membership benefits listed below...

[check out
free web
hosting](#)

Member benefit 1

BMUG offers unique FREE website hosting!

Member benefit 2

BMUG members privileged access to AUSOM FirstClass

Member benefit 3

'Getting started' manuals — a bargain at \$2...

We are very proud of our small but growing library of *do it yourself* manuals for the Macintosh, all written *for members by members*.

We bring copies of each manual to meetings, and they always sell out. Now you can simply go to the manual page on our website and purchase 4 for \$10 online.

They presently include:

- Absolute Beginners
- Buying a Mac
- Scanning with your Mac
- Connecting your Mac
- Apple Mail essentials
- On Safari with your Mac
- Basic image adjustments
- Music and listening with your Mac
- iWeb with your Mac
- iChat with your Mac

and a new one, in response to demand, the latest...

- Backup your Mac


Member benefit 4

BMUG reference library

See news of exciting new titles on the next page...

[check out
BMUG
Manuals](#)

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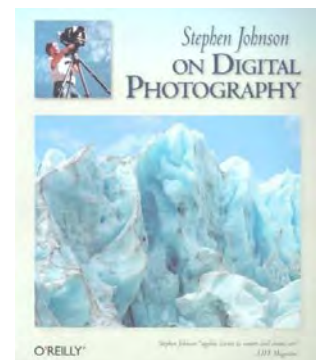
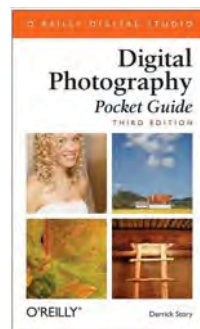
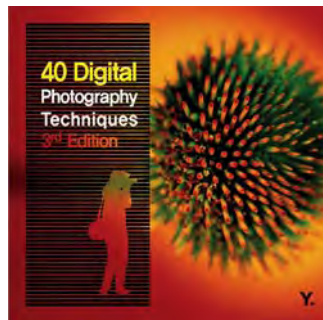
	<i>In your home or office, at a time to suit you</i>		Mac Assist
	✿ Geelong, Surf Coast & district	✿ Hardware installation and setup	
	✿ Troubleshooting, problem solving, tuition	✿ Mac OS X upgrades	
	✿ Broadband, Airport, networking	✿ Digital photography & scanning	
	<i>Expertise – experience – very reasonable rates</i>		5243 2946 or 0419 331 424



BMUG reference library

We have established partnerships with a number of publishers of Macintosh reference books and the club has a growing number of titles to borrow. To find out more, speak to or email our librarian, David Dixon.

Click on the cover images of our new library titles to read more about them at Amazon:



Donate your unwanted books and magazines

Is it about time you tidied the study or the spare room? David is looking for donations of books and magazines and I'm sure we all have something we could bring along to share with our new members.

Just bale them up and bring them along to our meeting — don't bother with the really tatty ones, we are looking for good stuff!



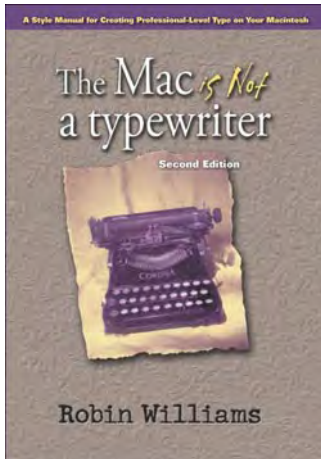
The Mac is not a Typewriter

Is the title of perhaps the single most treasured Mac book ever written.

The Author, Robin Williams, concerned at the unprofessional quality of many documents produced on the computer, wrote *the* standard text, still in print after almost 20 years! My copy is a bit tatty after all those years, but it is still a vital reference, and nothing in it has gone out of date.

These days, we all fancy ourselves as desktop publishers, whether we are producing a family history, or a club newsletter, but how many of us have had any professional training? Robin aims to fill the gap by presenting simple but essential rules for producing quality documents. Believe me, you will notice the difference if you follow her advice.

Here are one or two of her tips...



- Only one space after a full stop between sentences.
- Never format a document with the space bar — if you want to move text across, use tabs, as I have for this list.
- Use proper special characters where needed, for example:
 - option 8, a bullet: •
 - option shift 8, temperature degrees: °
 - option shift 2, the Euro symbol: €

and there are hundreds and hundreds more.

- Don't write headings in ALL CAPITALS.
- Use different fonts sparingly. Apart from variety fonts, such as those used for signs in cowboy films, party invitations, and so on, there are two main font families — serif and sans serif. If you use more than two or three fonts in a poster or book have a good reason for doing so.

Serif fonts, like this, are best for continuous text. The little serifs, or 'ticks' on the letters lead the eye on and make reading easier.

Headings are usually in sans serif, or without serif, fonts, like this — Helvetica is a classic sans serif typeface.

[read more on Amazon...](#)

And here is a current Amazon review:

"I am so glad this book is still around! I had forgotten what a great, useful, overview of basic typographic principles this "little gem" is.

I teach a Graphic Design class for non-Graphic Design majors in an art college. I was stunned to see most of the students putting two spaces after periods in a book they were making in my class. I explained why this was unnecessary (and in fact wrong) with most typefaces available on the computer, and they said they had all learned this in computer classes in the various high schools they had attended.

I unearthed my copy of this book (from 1990!) and brought it in the next week. Some students went to Amazon right away and bought it. Their work improved markedly.

I will make this a required text for the class next year, and advise anyone looking to learn the basics of good, typographic layout to purchase this wonderful little book."



Members' marketplace — wanted or for sale...

We are always looking for good older iMacs...

Many of our members are running old machines that won't run OS X. Imagine how frustrated they become when they are constantly hearing about stuff they just can't do!



[email Steve with your advert](#)

If you know someone with an unwanted older machine running OS X that is in good condition, ask them to email Steve and we will advertise it in this newsletter for just \$5.

Of course members' adverts are **free**.

BMUG members are always welcome to send us brief descriptions of any computers or accessories you would like to buy or sell. Obviously the club cannot take responsibility for any grievances that might arise from transactions, so keep the descriptions of gear as accurate as possible.

Can you help — BMUG needs a screen

As you know, we project all our computer demonstrations onto a screen. The committee is very keen to get a good quality screen of our own, but they are difficult to buy, these days. If you have good screen you would like to donate, or one that's so good that you might sell it to us for the right price, please contact Dick, our photography guru.

[email David to order a spindle or two](#)

Consumables bulk buying group

David is looking into saving members big money by making bulk purchases of everyday needs like CD's and DVD's. Through his business contacts, he can get high quality brand-name stocks at well below retail prices.

If you would like to order one or more spindles of disks, email David. We can't quote prices yet, but we believe this service could be very, very worthwhile.



BMUG mentor program

Members who weren't able to get to recent meetings may be unaware that we are now running a formal club mentor program. A group of highly experienced members are willing to answer your queries over the phone, by email, and even by attending at your home to give you personal training sessions.

The program has just begun, but already we are getting very positive feedback from members who say the sessions have given them the confidence to really progress with their machines.

From our experience so far, may we suggest:

- if you are using a really old machine, particularly if you are not running System OS X, we can do little to help you, so consider upgrading. Already several members have made this move, and they are invariably delighted with the new opportunities that are available to them.
- Invest in some handbooks. We highly recommend David Pogue's *Mac OS X, the Missing Manual* and our own *BMUG Absolute Beginners manual*.

Presently, the following members are participating in the mentor program, and we are getting very good feedback from them:

[email Steve about the mentor program](#)

Bruce Murray — assisted by David
Leonie & John Crook — Don
Cynthia Potter — Cliff
Gwen Cox — Dick
Carol Wilson — Steve
Ed Scouller — Dick
Keith Wayth — Ron
Jill Martin — Don
Lesley Fox — Steve

To participate, either as a mentor or as a beginner, sign up at the next meeting, or phone Steve on 5254 2576. And if you are a virtual member, we can offer assistance by phone or email.

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Is Digital Storage Safe?

Dick Brown

While following Don's presentation on *backing up your hard drive* at the last BMUG meeting, my mind strayed to two articles I've read recently that have pointed up the problems with digital storage. One was concerned with digital still images — that is photographs, and the other was with digital video.

The main concern of the writers was whether we will be able to access, or open, these files in the future. The secondary concern was the media we store them on. Is it of archival quality? These concerns don't relate only to image files of course, but to everything that we store and remove from the computer.

To put the cart before the horse, the answers they came to were probably **not** in both cases.

We are presented with many file formats to store images — JPG, TIFF and PICT etc. and these all have pro's and con's where quality of the images is the main criteria, but if you can't open the file, quality is a minor issue. There are two main worries, will the storage media actually preserve the data, and will the hardware needed to access this data still be around in the future?

The quality of storage media such CD and DVD has been called into question for some time now and there are Archival Quality discs of both these formats available which are claimed to be able to store digital data for 'a long time', but few dates are quoted. It would seem that for short term back up storage the cheap end of the CD and DVD market is more than likely able to fulfil our needs.

What, then do we store our library of digital images on? We could have them printed off photographically, make up Photo Albums, keep them closed and away from heat and damp and only look at them occasionally in subdued light. Strangely the conclusion for photographic images was to store them on FILM if you wanted to be sure of longevity and be certain you could print them in the future. This might entail scanning them to be able to use them, but it is assumed that there will always be means to convert physical objects into digital for use on the computer.

The same solution was also suggested for video and to quote "There's no 100% guaranteed solution for longevity but probably the best advice is to keep copies in at least two formats such as Mpeg2, that is commonly used with DVDs and on a tape format, such as MiniDV." This of course assumes that there will always be some Hardware available that can play DVDs and MiniDV tapes and that's not a given.



obsolete floppy disk

So perhaps the bigger problem is with the hardware, will we always be able to access all storage formats for all time? The answer there is *no we won't*. For example, try and open a floppy disk on any new Mac — you can't. Therefore anyone who has relied on Floppy Discs for archival storage needs to rethink their strategies.

The Floppy is not the only storage format to have bitten the digital dust, Syquest both 44 and 88, Zip, Jazz and EZ drives are all prominent by their absence, and the increasingly used Flash drives will more than likely be superseded by something else before very long. As these various disc formats were overtaken in performance by the next big thing, not only did they cease being manufactured, but the hardware to open and use them also ceased production.



Moore's Law

In 1965, Gordon Moore predicted that the number of components on a chip would double every two years, so that all electronic equipment would shrink and get cheaper, as it has.

These days, Moore's Law is typically quoted in terms of data storage. In other words, data storage halves in cost and doubles in capacity every 2 years or so.

The ongoing obsolescence process Dick has outlined is driven by the rapid increase in the density of data storage.

This not only affects the *amount* we store, but *what* we store. And we are always pushing harder.

Once, computers struggled to handle a simple letter taking up 10 or 12 kb.

Then we struggled to handle and store low-resolution images one meg in size.

Today, BMUG members are producing complex movies that stretch their machines' capability, and 60 meg files are commonplace. What will be next...

So we could have perfectly good discs with perfectly preserved information on them, but no way to get at it...

The main driving force behind all these disc formats disappearing was storage capacity. The floppy disc held 1.4MB, the Syquest held 44MB to start with, then increased to 88MB, followed by the Zip disc at 100MB, the EZ Drive at 135MB and the Jaz at 250MB. The CD then came in with a then amazing 650-700MB, soon to be followed by the DVD at 4.5GB, and eventually DVD double layer at 9GB.

There are two new DVD disc formats about to muddy the waters, Blu-Ray and HD DVD. The flash drive has quickly moved from 32MB to 4GB and what will follow that, something will and it won't be long in appearing.

The advantage of the Flash Drive is that it only needs a USB socket on the computer to be able to use it. It doesn't need its own special hardware. At the moment the Flash Drive with its solid state, no moving parts, seems to be the preferred route. Already Mac and other manufacturers are rumoured to be experimenting with laptops that combine spinning hard drives with solid state storage.

How long will it be before solid state storage is the only kind? Hard Drives fail and quite regularly, so storage that doesn't rely on high speed spinning discs does seem to be a good idea, but is it archival?

In practical terms, what do we do to ensure we can save our files and be able to use them in the future? I feel the only answer is to keep abreast of developments and if you do upgrade your computer be sure you can open ALL the storage media you are currently using with your old computer, on the new one.

A possible obsolescence free route might be to store data on a web based storage site which you would hope will keep up with all developments, but who knows. The future may be digital but now and again it doesn't seem any clearer.

Article quoted, "*Tiny Files set for a big future*" by Ian Hardy on the BBC 'Click' site.



various types of flash drives



This month's TOP TIP

How tidy is your desktop, and I don't mean the one with the computer sitting on it, I mean your Mac desktop?

The day we start with a new Mac, we all have really tidy desktop, with just the hard disk icon and our Dock showing, but soon, many of us end up with a desktop like this or worse:



This is not a good idea...

Apple went to a great deal of trouble setting up the OS X software to enable us to use our machines efficiently, and that system presumes you will benefit from using a rational file structure to keep everything in its place. In your User folder, you already have a nice, tidy file structure:



If you need more categories, and more folders, simply add them, then take all your loose documents and file them appropriately. You will feel much better, and you will waste much less time doing unnecessary searches to locate documents that are just lying around somewhere! To make this work, you also need to resolve not to just use ⌘ S, for 'save' all the time, because then you won't always know where your document is going.

This is a common cause of lost files.

Do a 'save as', the first time, and you will be able to confirm that the file is being saved where you expect. And incidentally, to spare yourself grief, always do a *save* every single time you pause to think. This **must** become instinctive.

Voilà...