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System 7 Corner

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Improving Your Macs Performance

Macs are a fascinating combination of machine and software which operates so seamlessly, its hard to tell where one begins and the other ends. I'd hate to say which is the more complicated. Yet as soon, as a new Mac or system is released, people all over the world start tinkering with the software, hoping to make the machine operate even more efficiently. Tinkerers from Australia to Scandinavia and Germany and points in between, work with both the software which makes your Mac operate the way it does and the software that comes with Macs to perform various functions. The results are often released as public domain software, freeware or relatively inexpensive shareware and can vastly improve your Macs performance and function.

When you've become familiar and comfortable with basic Mac operation, its time to consider some of these inexpensive improvements.

Before beginning, you should note that nearly all of the programs and system enhancements discussed are system 7 compatible. Some have system 6 versions, but most of these programs use Mac System software in ways that are only possible under system 7. So my first suggestion for enhancing your Mac if you're using an older Mac with System 6x or earlier is to get and install System 7.1. You'll find it well worth the money and time. (You may need to upgrade to four megs if you're have only two megs.)

Also, the Mac Enhancements discussed were tested on an LCIII, a Color Classic, and an LC with many other system additions and programs with no difficulties. But you will undoubtedly have a different combination of things on your hard drive, so if you get and install these programs, watch for unusual behavior or system crashes. Problems like these can arise with nearly any program, but are more likely to occur with some of the newer programs discussed.

Another consideration with these programs is that some of them will take some of your RAM which will show up as a higher memory allocation to your system folder if you access "About This Mac" under the Apple Menu. If you find yourself unable to open programs which take larger portions of memory, you may need to turn off some of the additions to do so.

The following discussion will mention aliases a lot, so if you're new to System 7 or Macs and don't know what an alias is.....

An alias is a "stand" for applications, folders, files, disks or whatever. They don't take a lof of disk space because they aren't copies of the programs. Rather they are a short set of directions...remote control switches.....for opeing whatever they stand for. An Alias points to its original. Any documents created or changes in documents opened are stored with the original program.

The advantage to this system is that it can save opening a lot of fiels. Aliases can be made of frequently used programs and placed in the Apple Menu or something like Alias Menu when the Apple Menu gets crowded. I've made aliases of my most used applications and programs so that I can go immediately to them without opening folders.

Aliases can also be placed in folders to save going to the control panels. One of my boys' games required a sixteen color monitor. We made an alias of the monitor control panel and placed the alias in the game folder. That save time everytime they wanted to play the game.

Aliases can be made by clicking the program for which you want to make an alias, once so it darkens,

then selecting "Make Alias" from the File Menu. The name under the alias will be italicized.

System Enhancements

AliasMenu by Benoit Widemann (\$20 shareware) is a control panel device which helps organize programs, work in progress, etc., and speed access to them by adding menus to the finder. The menus appear in the menu bar and working exactly like the Apple Menu. AliasMenu can add up to nine new menus if you have the room and substitute icons for the names of the menus if you have a small screen. Each menu can contain as many applications, programs, etc., as you wish which are selected in the usual fashion, i.e., scrolling down the menu until the desired item is highlighted and releasing your mouse button. With it, menus for utilities or applications or even folders of items you're currently working on can be created.

AliasMenu is installed by dropping it on the system folder whereupon an "AliasMenu" folder is created in the system folder. That folder will contain a folder labeled "1.Alias". "Alias" will appear in your menu bar on restart. To change the name of the folder, simply rename it. Place the aliases of any programs, folders, etc., you want to appear in that menu in that folder. To create new menu, simply create a new subfolder in the AliasMenu folder with an appropriate name. Subfolders must have a number, followed by a period and a name with no space in between. Numbers of folders must be continuous.

AliasMenu also lets you assign keyboard equivalents to open programs and folders as well as perform several other functions. More details are given in the complete documentation which accompany the program.

MenuChoice (\$15.00 shareware) by Kerry Glendinning offers an additional or alternative method or organizing your programs and files through aliases. MenuChoice is a control panel device which enables hierarchical menus under the AppleMenu. With it and alias you can open applications, control panel devices and documents of all kinds quickly and easily using your Apple Menu. Just drop the MenuChoice file your your System 7 control panels folder and restart your Mac. Then every file place in your "Apple Menu Items will show up as a sub-menu under the Apple menu containing the aliases of whichever programs you've placed there.

I find the submenus a little more cumbersome than using AliasMenu's menu bar additions, but MenuChoice provides an alternative method and may be especially useful for those with 9" monitors.

File Buddy 1.2.3 by Laurence Harris is a general System 7 file utility (\$15 shareware) which improves several file related functions. Best of all in terms of AliasMenu and MenuChoice discussed above, you can drag and drop a program or file for which you want to make an alias, onto File Buddy while holding the Command and Shift and Option keys down. A dialog box appears which allows you to make the alias and place it in the appropriate AliasMenu file without digging through all the files. That's only one of a dozen or so file related functions and it comes with good documentation. It is an application, not a control panel device. Put it in your utilities folder.

Speedy Finder 7 (\$20 Shareware) by a twenty-three year old Australian medical student, Victor Tan, is the most extensive and most useful of all of these. Its a control panel device (Drop it on your System folder to install it.) which is fully documented and allows control of four groups of options from the control panel by clicking check boxes on or off. These groups of options are "Speed Options", "Document Linking", "Cool Options", and "Menu Options." These options allow you to change over twenty basic operations. My favorite that it greatly improves the speed of copying information to and from the hard drive, speeds trash emptying, removes the rename delay and adds several optional command keys. Some of these are "Command + M" to make an alias, "Command + T" to empty the trash and so on. As with all

command options, they speed your use of the Mac by saving the time it takes to select these options from the pulldown menu. The time involved may not seem like much, but it does add up!

One of my favorite SpeedyFinder options is that it removes Balloon Help. Yes, Balloon Help is great when you're first learning the Mac and how to use a program, but it definitely slows things down and isn't very useful once you've mastered the basics. If you need to turn it on when learning a new program, that can be done by selecting SpeedyFinder from your control panels and turning the "Remove Balloon Help Option" off. Removing Balloon Help also saves space in the Menu Bar which can be important if you've taken advantage of AliasMenu and the SuperClock, discussed later in this article.

A number of programs exist for changing the way buttons, slide bars, folders, and so on look including adding color for those with color monitors. In addition, the programs originally included with your Mac can be greatly improved with additional or replacement programs. These issues will be discussed in future issues of Teachers Mac.

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All of the programs discussed above and in the next two articles can be obtained from AOL, many BBSs and other sources or from SchoolHouse Mac. Send \$5.00 (no shipping) and ask for the Better Mac Disk.