double Click

July 2006 Double Click Main Meeting Report

by Jim Macak

The July 16th Double Click meeting was opened by Double Click President Jim Macak. Attendance was about average for this hot mid-Summer Sunday. The announced agenda included the Beginners SIG presentation, the Q&A session, the main demonstration of *GarageBand 3* by Chuck Floading and, concluding the meeting, the monthly Double Click raffle.

Two new members were welcomed to the meeting.

Beginners Session *– Notes by Steve Parker*

Steve Parker presented his "Beginners SIG" presentation.

This is the first in a series of presentations about basic routine maintenance for Mac OS X.

Credit: Randy B. Singer, MacAttorney web site.

Slow operation and generally unusual behavior are signs that may mean that **permissions** need to be repaired on your Mac's hard drive. Occasionally in OS X some key file ownership and permissions get changed, for whatever reason, by applications. When ownership and permissions get changed, things just don't work as they should. The symptoms might be programs quitting unexpectedly, preferences not being remembered, programs not launching, etc. A frequent cause is faulty program installers. Most users of Mac OS X have not intentionally modified privileges and simply need a utility (discussed below) to reset system privileges to their correct default values.

What are Disk Permissions? Mac OS X is based on the Unix operating system, which is designed to support multiple users, and key features of Unix are file and program ownership and what kind of user has permission to read and modify files as well as execute (run) programs.
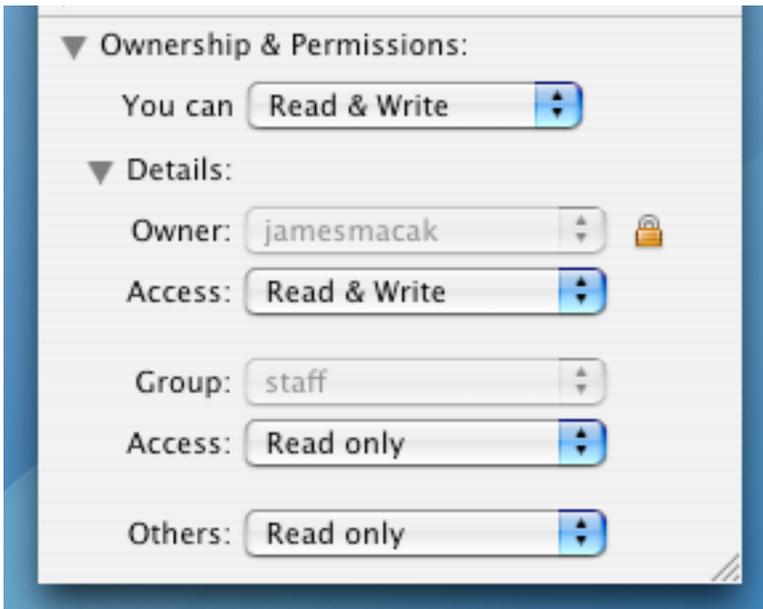
Mac OS X is designed to control access by users to important information through a process known as **Permissions**. Mac OS X automatically sets permissions for disks, folders, and files.

Three Types of Users: Mac OS X provides distinct permissions for three types of users:
• The "owner" of the item, which is usually the name of the person who created the item, or yourself.
• Any member of the *group* assigned to the item by Mac OS X.
• Any other *user* with access to the computer.

Three Levels of Permissions: Mac OS X provides three levels of permissions:
• Read allows a user to open the item to see its contents and change it.
• Write allows a user to change the contents and save them.
• Execute allows a user to open an application and use it.

Mac OS X automatically sets permissions for disks, folders, and files. The simplest way to see this in action is to select a file in Mac OS X and then choose **Get Info** from the Finder's **File** menu. Then refer to the "Ownership and Permissions" section of the Get Info window.

- <u>Read & Write</u> allows a user to open the item to see its contents and change it.
- <u>Read Only</u> allows a user to open the item to see its contents, but not change the contents or copy them.
- <u>No Access</u> blocks all access to the item so that users can't open the item, change its contents, or copy its contents.

Repairing Disk Permissions. Because the permissions settings can get corrupted, Apple has provided a means of repairing them in its **Disk Utility** program. Compared to earlier OS X versions, permissions corruption seems to be less of a problem in Mac OS X v. 10.3 (Panther), and v. 10.4 (Tiger).

To repair disk permissions, use **Disk Utility**, located in the Applications folder. Open Disk Utility and select the disk or partition of a disk that you wish to repair. Next, select the **First Aid** tab (usually the default). Start the repair process by clicking on the **Repair Disk Permissions** button. Disk Utility will proceed to repair the permissions on the selected disk or partition. You may see messages in the right-hand window as the repair process proceeds. When the repair is complete, the message will say something like, "Permissions repair complete. The privileges have been verified or repaired on the selected volume."

Note: There's no need to need to verify permissions before you repair them. Unless you can read the report and understand what Disk Utility proposes to do, there is little point in verifying first.

<u>Maintenance Myth #1</u>: "You need to repair permissions from a copy of Disk Utility that resides on the drive that you are repairing."

There are times when you may need to repair permissions when started up from a drive other than the drive being repaired, such as from another hard drive or the OS X Installer CD-ROM. When a program is installed on your hard disk, often by an installer program, a special file known as a **receipt** is placed in the Receipts folder inside the Library folder on your hard drive. The receipt contains the ownership and permissions reference information that is used by Disk Utility.

It used to be that you were warned against repairing permissions on one disk while booted from another (such as the OS X Installer CD-ROM). This was because only the receipt files on the drive you were booted from would be consulted, not the receipt files on the drive you were repairing. Thus, not all permissions would be set correctly. Since late OS X 10.2, this hasn't been true. You can run Repair Permissions while booted from a disk other than the one that you are repairing (e.g., the OS X installer CD-ROM), and it will correctly use the receipts on the disk being repaired.

Maintenance Myth #2: "You never need to repair permissions under OS X."

While repairing permissions isn't a panacea, it is definitely worth your while to repair permissions occasionally—say, once a month or so. The reality is that running Repair Permissions (1) doesn't require that you purchase anything to do it; (2) can be accomplished fairly quickly; (3) doesn't hurt anything, and (4) after repairing permissions sometimes the problem(s) that the you are experiencing are gone.

Maintenance Myth #3: "All permissions are repaired by Disk Utility."

This isn't true. Disk Utility does have a limitation with respect to repairing permissions. Only receipts for software installed by Apple are consulted, so permissions for non-Apple software aren't repaired.
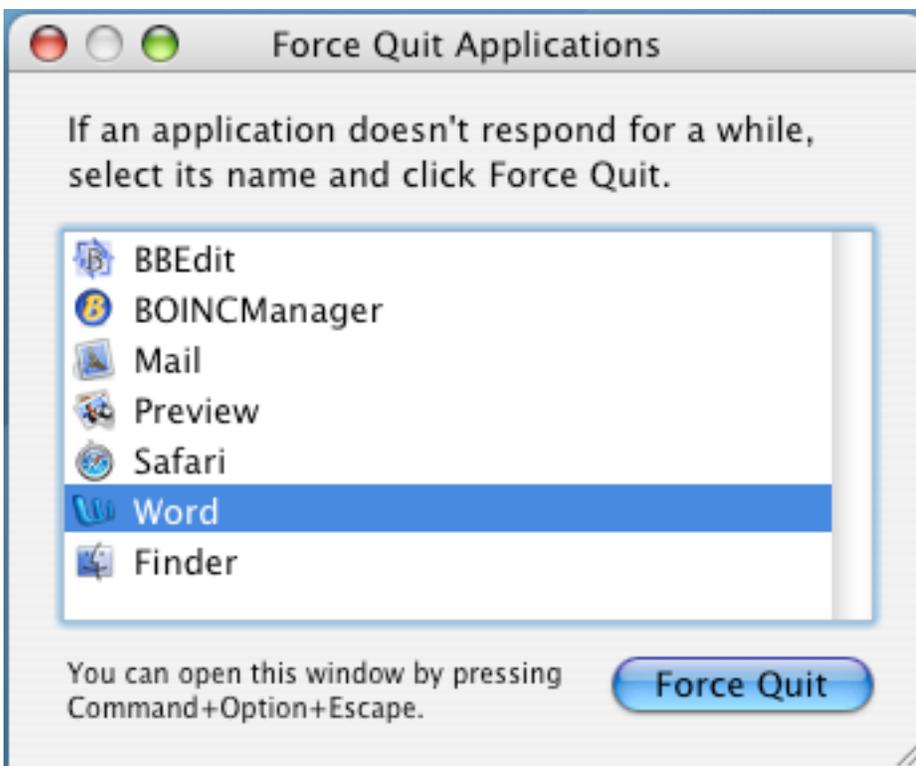

Steve Parker
July 2006 Beginners SIG

"Q & A" Session / Announcements

The Questions and Answers session followed Steve's presentation. As usual, a wide variety of topics were discussed.

Force Quit

One general interest question that was raised was what to do when an application is unresponsive (aka "hung", "stalled", "crashed"). Bt way of answer, it was noted there are several methods to "Force Quit" an OS X application that is not behaving properly.

- Choose "Force Quit..." from the blue Apple menu
- Type Command+Option+Escape simultaneously

These two methods will bring up a dialogue box like the above in which you can choose which application to force to quit.

Another method to invoke a Force Quit is to use the Dock. For example, a Command+Option click on the offending application's icon in the Dock will produce a drop-down menu which will offer several options relative to that application, one of which is Force Quit.

One may also Force Quit an application (or any process) by using Apple's Activity Manager utility. Click the "process" you wish to quit and then click on the "Quit Process" icon. A drop down "sheet" will offer you these three options:

One may also "kill" a process using Apple's Terminal application.

A major advantage of OS X (over Macintosh System 9 and earlier) is that force quitting a "crashed" application will not result in overall system instability. Any other open applications (including the Finder) will not be adversely affected by the problematic "crashed" application.

Online Tutorials

Another discussion during the Q&A session yielded a recommendation for an online resource for Macintosh tutorials. The site, http://www.lynda.com/, offers an "Online Training Library" and CD-ROM titles which include such subjects as Photoshop, Flash, Dreamweaver, Illustrator, Office, digital photography, Web design, digital video, and many others. The subscription-based service also offers many free sample movie tutorials.

Member Presentation

We had our first "3 Minute Ticker" presentation at the July meeting. This new meeting feature provides an opportunity for members to informally discuss a Macintosh-related experience that they have had, be it good or bad. (See the June 2006 Main Meeting Report for more information about the 3 Minute Ticker. Also discussed in that report is "Tell Us About Your

Business," another new meeting feature that provides Double Click members an opportunity to introduce the group to their business in a five to 10 minute talk.)

Bob Stone (who took a bit more than 3 minutes) discussed his trials and tribulations but ultimate success in printing a poster size graphic. He showed us his final result and all agreed that the print was of very high quality.

Members interested in presenting a "3 Minute Ticker" or "Tell Us About Your Business" talk should email Jerry at <jsmaglik@wildblue.net>.

Picnic Announcement

Members were reminded that the August Double Click meeting **will not** be at our UW-M site. Rather, the annual August Double Click picnic meeting will be at Gene and Susie Braun's home in Waukesha.

Check out further information about the picnic on the Double Click web site at http://www.double-click.org/meetings.html

Please be sure to RSVP! We need to know how much sweet corn to buy...

Files of the Month

Jim Macak presented some widgets for the "Files of the Month" demonstration at the meeting.

The first two widgets that Jim showed display weather radar images. He uses them as a quick way to check the weather outlook for outdoor activities he is planning for the next few hours. Certainly similar radar images can be viewed on any one of many web sites, but the widgets offer the same info with one quick click of your mouse. The images are updated automatically so that you are always viewing the latest information.

Radar In Motion widget

This Dashboard widget grabs radar images from the Weather Channel or NOAA and displays the animation. One can access the radar for a given city in the United States or get a regional map, including several international maps. The widget has options for displaying and updating the maps, including weather alerts and the ability to save maps for a specified period of time.
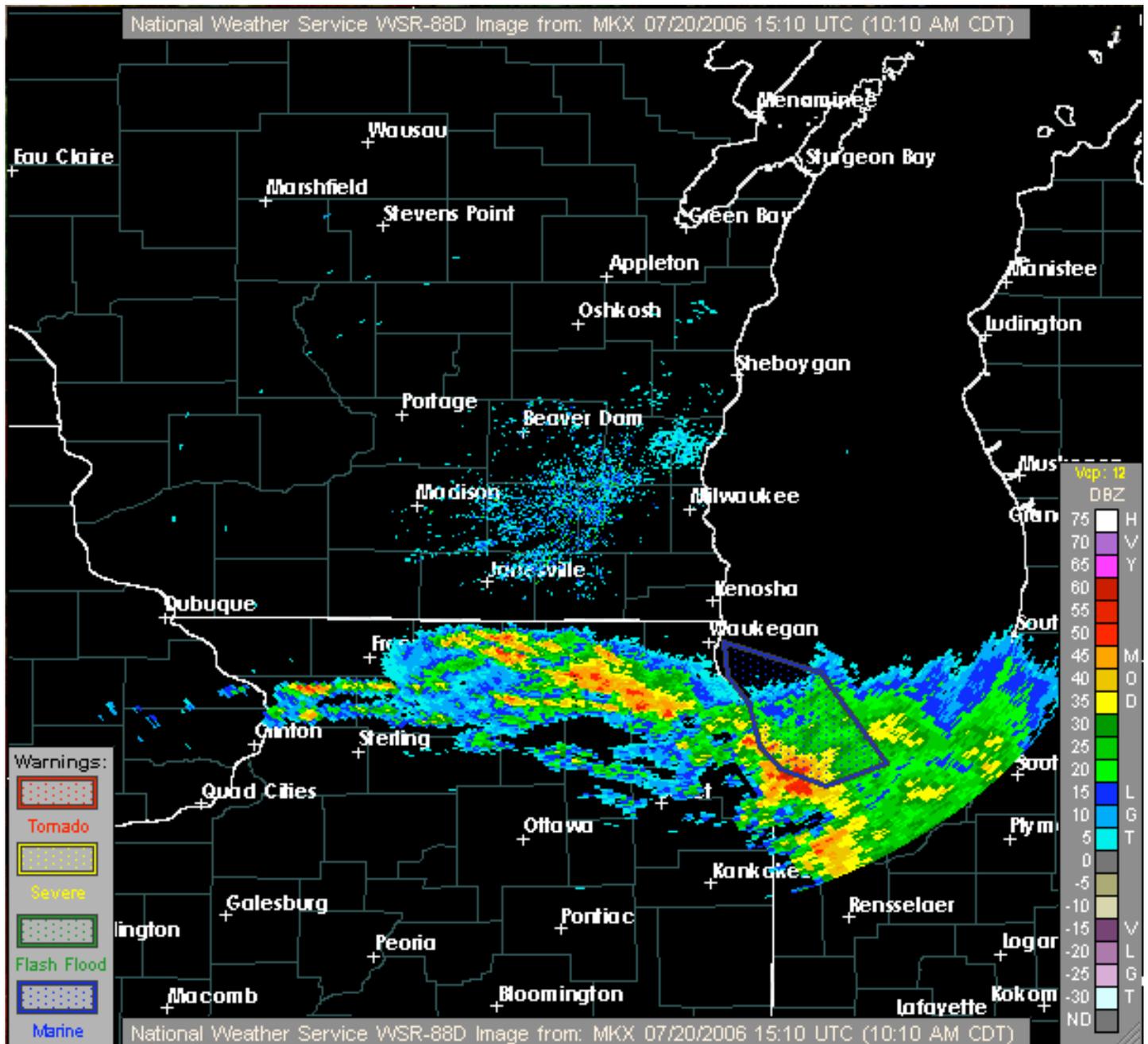
The animation of the images helps indicate the direction in which a storm or weather front is moving.

Radar in Motion is freeware.

Requires OS X 10.4

http://www.apple.com/downloads/dashboard/information/radarinmotion.html

DoppleViewer widget

This widget displays radar images from the National Weather Service in a resizable pane. Click to cycle through each of the available radar views for your location. Only the latest image is displayed by this widget, so there is
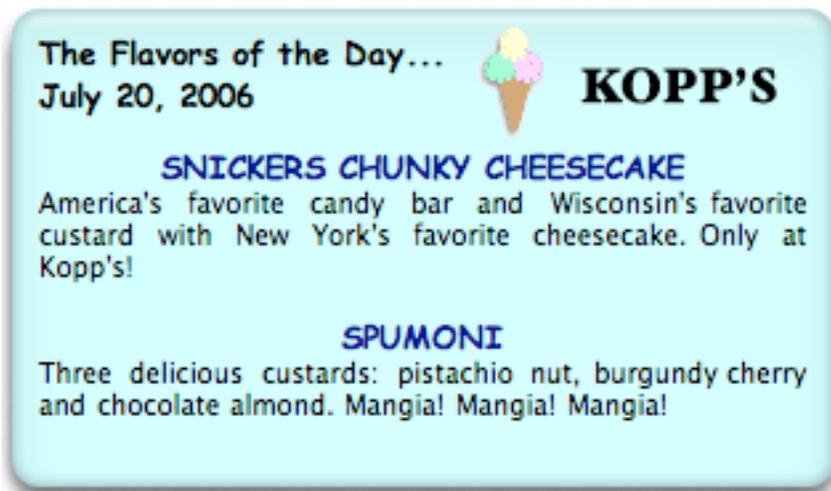
no "time-lapse" display or animation to the image. The image display can be cycled through several different types of radar images.

Doppleviewer is freeware.

Requires OS X 10.4

http://www.apple.com/downloads/dashboard/information/doppleviewer.html

Custard Flavors widget

Jim next previewed a widget of his own. He said that in his readings about widgets he had discovered that they are not particularly difficult to program because they are written in html code (the same language in which web pages are written) and JavaScript (which is, likewise, a relatively simple scripting/programming language widely used for web pages).

Jim thought it would be interesting to try producing a widget himself. He already knew some basics of html coding, so he picked up an introductory text to JavaScript, *JavaScript for the World Wide Web* (a Peachpit Press book by Tom Negrino and Dori Smith) and learned some JavaScript basics. He also read the widget programming information on Apple's Web site.

He wanted to produce a simple widget that he would find useful and that other Milwaukee area Mac users might find worthwhile too. Jim finally came up with the idea of a widget that tracks the changing flavors of his favorite summer treat, Kopp's frozen custard.

Jim noted that his *Custard Flavors* widget is "not quite ready for prime time" but should be tuned up "real soon now." For those of you interested in gastronomic delights similar to Jim, he will note when it is available via an email to the Double Click "dc-talk" list.

Main Presentation – *Notes by Chuck Floading*

Apple's *GarageBand 3*

Presented by Chuck Floading, Member, Double Click Board of Directors.

GarageBand 3 is a software application from Apple Computer that allows users to create music. Amateurs and non-musicians are the intended audience for this often overlooked component of Apple's iLife '06 suite. While *GarageBand* may be the least complicated of Apple's many audio processing applications, it is by no means a toy. The underlying architecture is based on the Apple's professional application *Logic Pro*.

Even if you don't have a musical bone in your body, even if you don't know the difference between a B-sharp and a C note, *GarageBand* makes music making possible. Chuck's July demo helped unlock those possibilities for us.

Confession #1
As a music making hobbiest, I don't use *GarageBand* in my day-to-day set up.

Confession #2
After preparing for this presentation and learning about the application, I just might start!

Just like the graphics and word processing applications you are familiar with, audio apps like *GarageBand* have their own set of unique tools and conventions. Many of these conventions are attempts by computer programmers to make their software as much like "real world" audio recording gear as possible.

Three (of many) Features that make *GarageBand* Special:
1) Its ability to manipulate Apple Loops.
2) Integration with other Apple applications.
3) The "Track Lock" feature. (Something the geeks will appreciate.)

For my demo, we took a brief tour of the *GarageBand* interface. Like all Apple applications, it's as intuitive as a piece of software can be.

We also composed a few projects:
1) Using Apple loops
2) A pod cast/movie

Audio Interface: If your Macintosh has a built in microphone or a microphone input jack, you can use that to record live audio. However, you will get better results if you buy a separate piece of hardware dedicated to capturing audio. This piece of hardware is called an "audio interface." Interfaces come in many forms from $50 USB adapter/converters to Firewire & USB input boxes to PCI cards. All of these devices convert analog audio from a microphone or audio cable into digital information that applications like *GarageBand* can use.

Latency: When an audio application has to do more than one thing at once, such as process a piece of audio, the part that is processed takes a fraction of a second longer to play back. The delay between the audio parts that are playing back real time and the part that is being processed is called latency.

GarageBand Resources

Apple's *GarageBand* web page
This is obviously the best place to start.
http://www.apple.com/ilife/garageband/

Books

The MacAddict Guide to Making Music with GarageBand
http://macaudioguy.com/gbb/
Even if you don't buy the MacAddict book, you can download some of the ".band" files and play with them.
http://macaudioguy.com/gbb/downloads/

Following are a few books available from the Milwaukee County Federated Library System. They address older versions of *GarageBand* and *iLife*, but make a fine starting point.

The Macintosh iLife '05 by Jim Heid
http://tinyurl.com/nqleh

Teach Yourself Visually iLife '04 by Michael E. Cohen and Dennis R. Cohen
http://tinyurl.com/r427t

GarageBand for Dummies by Bob "Dr. Mac" LeVitus
http://tinyurl.com/pfbrn

Other Apple Web Sites

Free online seminar from Apple
You have to register (free) and then you can go through a collection of text and video training. Note that this seminar and the tutorials have a touch of a sales pitch tone to them. The information is very useful, though.
http://seminars.apple.com/seminarsonline/garageband/apple/index.html?s=50

Apple *iLife '06* Tutorials
http://www.apple.com/ilife/tutorials/
http://www.apple.com/ilife/tutorials/garageband/index.html

Other sites of interest

Inside Home Recording is targeting home recording enthusiasts ranging from beginners to professional musicians looking for the latest news, reviews, examples, and techniques to hone their craft. The site offers very useful podcasts!
http://www.insidehomerecording.com/

icompositions is an online community for sharing music and music recording tips.
http://www.icompositions.com/index.php
http://www.icompositions.com/site/tour/freeloops/

Dent du Midi is an application that takes standard MIDI files and generates separate files for each track that contains the MIDI note data. These files are suitable for dropping into Apple's *GarageBand* application for use as loops or entire tracks.
http://homepage.mac.com/beryrinaldo/ddm/

MacUpdate.com has links to software, and Apple loops for use in *GarageBand*.
http://www.macupdate.com/search.php?os=macosx&keywords=Garageband

Add-ons you can buy

None of these links represents an official product endorsement. These are just recommendations on what to look for and where to start if you want to beef up your Macintosh's audio capabilities. Where applicable, I've shopped around for price, but it's best if you do your own research.

If you want to do any serious music recording on your computer, you'll need some sort of audio interface. Make sure it has an analog input. Some interfaces are for MIDI only. Most interfaces have 2 analog inputs and one MIDI in.

MacMice Guitar Plug & Mic Plug
These small USB audio adapters for Mac users plug right into the output jack of an electric guitar, bass, or dynamic mic and convert the analog signal output to a high quality USB audio signal, for sending to a computer USB audio input. Costs about $20
http://eshop.macsales.com/item/DVForge/MICPLUG/
http://coolusb.ca/in-gmplug.htm

Griffin Technology PowerWave USB Audio Interface & Amplifier
This USB audio interface and amplifier provides high-quality USB audio input and amplified output for your desktop. Shop around. Costs about $150
http://coolusb.ca/in-pwave.htm

Griffin GarageBand Microphone Cable
XLR connector at one end and stereo mini jack at the other
http://www.griffintechnology.com/products/garagebandcables/

MacMice MicFlex USB Microphone System
USB microphone system on a gooseneck! What it lacks in sound quality, it makes up for in ease of use and low price. Costs about $35
http://tinyurl.com/h9xml

Shure SM58 vocal microphone
Best value for money in a microphone. It offers professional level sound quality and is very rugged. This is not a USB mic. It needs a special connector to work with a mini jack microphone input. Try the Mic Plug mentioned above for USB input, or buy an audio interface. Or, if your computer has a mini jack for microphone input, you will need an XLR to mini jack adapter. Costs about $100.
http://tinyurl.com/n6exq
http://froogle.google.com/froogle?q=Shure+SM58&btnG=Search

Edirol UA-25 USB Audio and MIDI interface. Costs about $150
http://www.sweetwater.com/store/detail/UA25/

M-Audio.com
"Pro-sumer" level peripherals and extra hardware.
http://www.m-audio.com/index.php?do=products.filter&ID=garageband

August 20th Meeting Preview:

Double Click's Annual Picnic

Hosted by Gene and Susie Braun, Double Click Members.

It's time to break out of the lecture hall and enjoy some food and camaraderie at our annual Double Click picnic. Gene and Susie Braun will host the picnic once again in their Waukesha home's backyard. Bring your own main course, beverages and a side dish to share. Double Click will provide grills and the fresh sweet corn for our yearly summer gathering.

This is a great chance to sit and chat with your fellow Double Click members and get to know them a bit better, so pack your picnic basket and invite your spouse or "significant other" to join us!

To help you find your way to the Braun's backyard in the ever-confounding 'burb of Waukesha, directions to the Braun's house and maps of their location are available at http://www.double-click.org/meetings.html.

RSVP: Please email Jerry Smaglik at picnic@double-click.org and let him know that you will be attending (and how many guests you'll bring)

Check the Double Click website for more meeting information:

http://www.double-click.org

This meeting report was written, edited and produced by Jim Macak, the President of Double Click, Inc..

Jim is an Apple Certified Help Desk Specialist and Macintosh help consultant for the Milwaukee area. His website is http://www.yourmacdoc.com/