



May 2006 Double Click Main Meeting Report

by Jim Macak

The May 21st Double Click meeting was opened by Double Click President Jim Macak who welcomed a slightly smaller crowd than usual and then opened the floor to questions and comments.

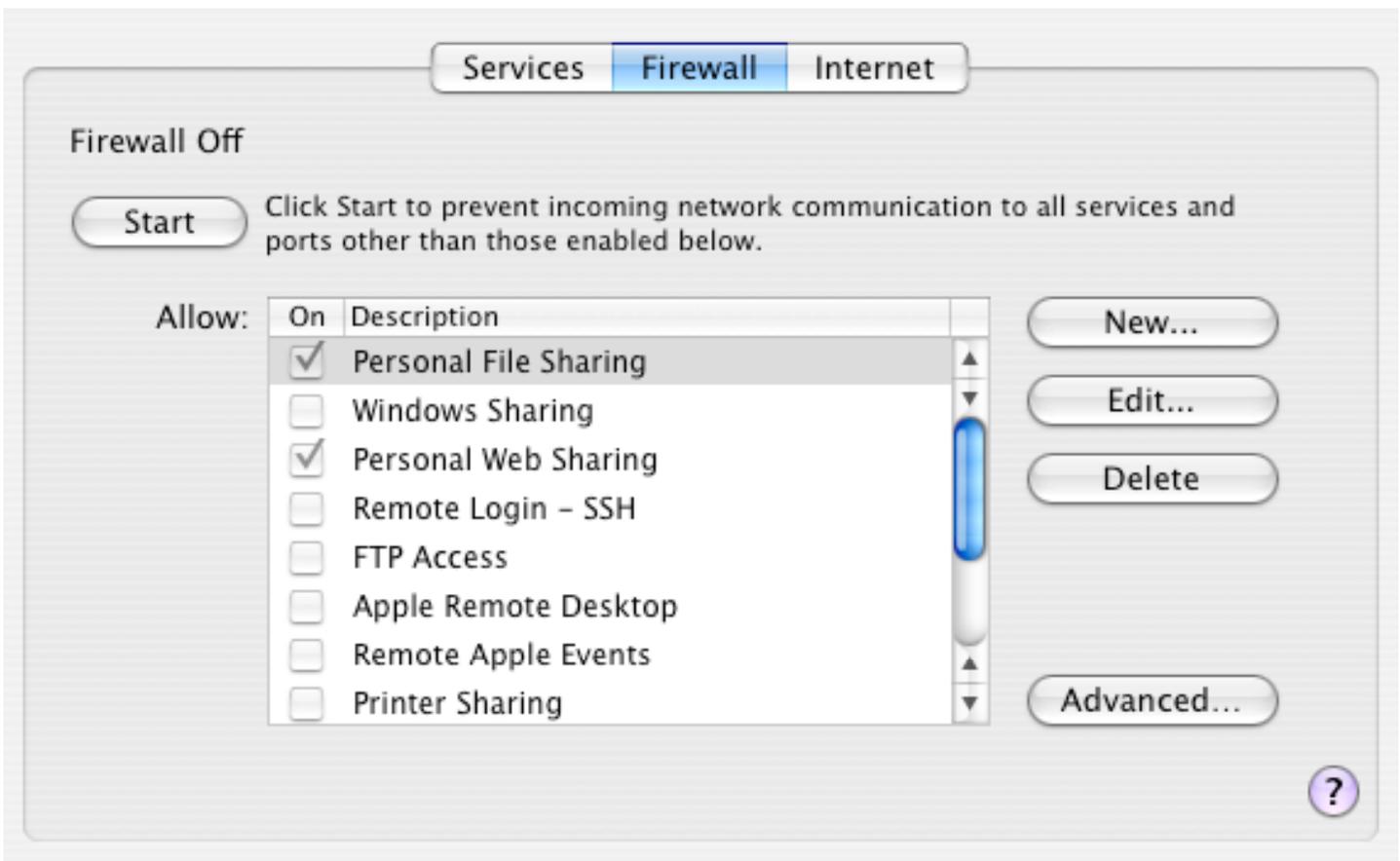
A Positive Experience

One member commented on a good repair experience at Computize, a local "Apple Specialist" offering Macintosh sales and service. He saved hundreds of dollars on a potential repair when the honest folks at Computize found a simple fix for his Mac's problem.

Beginners SIG Session

Steve Parker then presented his “Beginners SIG” demonstration. The built-in OS X firewall was the topic. A firewall can be hardware or software based and can be used to block unwanted network communication with your computer. Using a firewall protects your computer from users on other networks or the Internet. The firewall provides this protection by closing data “ports” on your computer.

Ports on a computer are like the doors and windows of a house. Thus ports are the means by which data enters your computer. An open port or door allows entry from the outside, whether for good or evil purpose. Closing that port or door offers protection.



The built-in OS X firewall software is set via the “Sharing” preference pane of System Preferences. Starting the firewall in the Sharing preference pane prevents incoming network communication to all services and ports of your Macintosh. If you need to use some of these Mac OS X services, such as personal file sharing, Windows sharing, or FTP access, you need to open

ports in the firewall to allow traffic for that service to and from your computer. When you select a service in the Services pane of Sharing preferences, it is automatically selected in the Firewall pane, and the port is opened.

The use of a hardware firewall or a software firewall is strongly recommended for any computer user who connects to the Internet via an "always on" type of access, such as provided by cable or DSL Internet Service Providers. (A hardware firewall is typically provided by a wired or wireless router, including Apple's Airport Extreme, and is installed "between" your cable or DSL modem and your Macintosh.) Using one or the other is generally considered adequate protection – you need not use both a hardware *and* a software firewall simultaneously.

- ***Bonus Information***

(Steve's Beginners SIG presentation is purposefully kept brief and at a basic level. Thus, the following information was not included in his presentation but is offered here for those of you who may be interested.)

There are several web sites that provide testing of the ports on your computer. Although they are primarily oriented towards Windows users, the port testing sites nevertheless will test and report on the port status of Macintosh computers.

One popular site for this type of testing is <http://www.grc.com/default.htm>

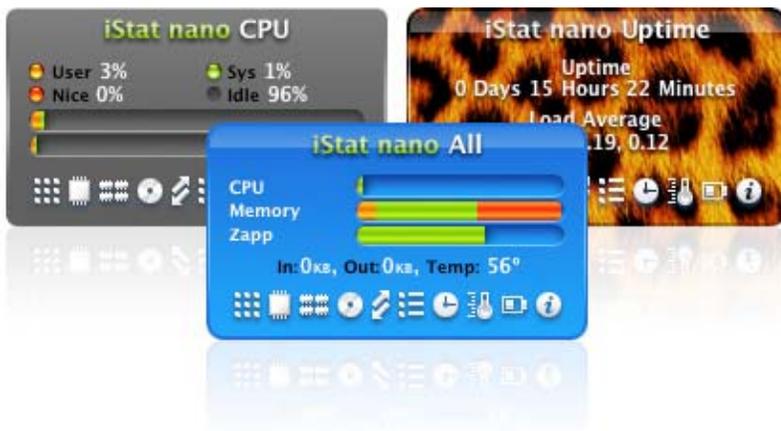
Go to that page, scroll down and select the "ShieldsUP!" link. Click on the "Proceed" button and (if asked) allow your browser to "send" the non-secure form(s) to get to the next page.

Then click on the "File Sharing" and "Common Ports" buttons to perform these tests to see how well your Mac's ports are protected. If any ports are reported as "open," you should seriously consider implementing a firewall. (My Macintosh is "behind" my router's hardware firewall and achieves a perfect "TruStealth" rating for these tests.)

File of the Month

Jim presented a single “File of the Month” at the meeting, a nifty widget. (In case you hadn’t already noticed and are wondering, yes, Jim is enamored with widgets!)

iStat nano widget



This is a system utility widget that provides a view of detailed information on your Mac’s CPU, memory utilization, hard drives, IP and external IP, bandwidth, CPU temperature, battery, uptime and a list of the top four processes. The widget’s background “skin” can be customized.

Freeware

Requires OS X 10.4

<http://www.islayer.com/index.php?op=item&id=21>

Main Demo

This month's main demonstration had an email theme and was presented in two parts.



Louise Dahms, a charter member of Double Click, started the demonstration with a tour of *Eudora*, an email application that has been available for the Macintosh for many years. She uses it as an alternative to Apple's *Mail* program.

Louise demonstrated the basic interface elements of *Eudora*, many of which have at least a passing similarity to those of Apple's *Mail*. *Eudora* offers a wealth of customizable features and thus can be "tweaked" a bit more than Apple's *Mail*.

Eudora offers most of the features of other modern email programs, including:

- Finds messages quickly with powerful search functions.
- Addresses emails quickly and easily with automatic name completion.
- Manages multiple email accounts easily and discretely within the single program.
- Sends and receives email in the background.
- Offers automatic spell checking and the ability to choose numerous font, formatting and color settings.
- Provides easy handling of attachments and the ability to view HTML and graphics right in the body of a message.

However, some *Eudora* critics note that Qualcomm, the publisher of *Eudora*, has been slow to update the program. For example, although *Eudora* runs fine under OS X, it is written as a "Carbon" application as opposed to using the "Cocoa" application environment, which would enable it to make use of all the features that OS X makes available to any modern "Cocoa" application. (Another example of the *Qualcomm's* lackadaisical attitude towards updating *Eudora* are the support web pages on the *Qualcomm* website which still show pictures of *Eudora* running under OS 9!)

Nevertheless, if you are unsatisfied with Apple's *Mail* for whatever reason, *Eudora* is worth a tryout. It is available for free (with some limits to its functionality), in a "sponsored" mode (ads appear on your screen) or in "subscription" mode (\$49.95 per year). Check it out at:

<http://www.eudora.com/email/>

Jim Macak, Double Click President, presented part two of the email presentation, discussing email tips and etiquette.

Jim had done some Internet searching and came across several websites that offered information about how to use email to maximum advantage. Although some of the sites he found were actually oriented towards the business user of email, most of the information on the sites can be generalized and apply to any email user.

Interestingly, most of the websites offered many of the same tips. So Jim presented the tips from one of the websites that seemed to offer most all of the common tips. The source was actually a "blog" written by the ex-Mac evangelist, Guy Kawasaki. His tips include:

- Craft your subject line
- Limit your recipients
- Don't write in ALL CAPS
- Keep it short
- Quote back
- Use plain text
- Control your URLs
- Don't fabricate unanswerable questions
- Attach files infrequently
- Ask permission (if you must, for the two above)
- Chill out

Following are URLs for Kawasaki's tips and also several other sites that Jim found useful. (The final site is an excellent and very complete resource.)

The Effective Emailer

http://blog.guykawasaki.com/2006/02/the_effective_e.html

E-Mail - Keep it Simple

<http://www.wap.org/journal/emailrules/default.html>

E-Mail Etiquette

<http://www.emailreplies.com/Index.html>

Photos wrecked my email

http://www.60-seconds.com/184_photos_in_email.html

Tips for Mastering E-mail Overload

<http://hbsworkingknowledge.hbs.edu/item.jhtml?id=4438&t=srobbins>

A Beginner's Guide to Effective Email

<http://www.webfoot.com/advice/email.top.html>

Jim concluded that perhaps the most important point to remember when communicating via email is that email is *not* equivalent to face-to-face conversation. Subtle body language cues are missing from email and consequently the addressee may interpret your writing quite differently than your intent unless you write very clearly and carefully.

This meeting report was written and produced by Jim Macak, Double Click President. Jim is an Apple Certified Help Desk Specialist and Macintosh help consultant for the Milwaukee area. His website is <http://www.yourmacdoc.com/>

Double Click

June 11th Meeting Preview:

"One Man's Mac" and "Parallels"

Presented by Dan Neesley, Double Click member, Mac aficionado and consultant.

Dan will share his multi-year accumulation of Macintosh knowledge and experience as he gives us a whirlwind tour of how he keeps his Mac organized and shows us the software tools he uses on a regular basis. He will also tip us off to relatively inexpensive hardware "gems" that he has discovered and found to be useful.



For the second part of his presentation, Dan will demonstrate *Parallels*, the new Windows emulation software for Intel-based Macs.



Double Click will be having another "Super Raffle" at the June meeting. The special prize for the additional raffle will be a one-year subscription to [Apple ProCare](#)! Members in attendance will receive one free raffle ticket. Additional tickets will be available for \$2.00 each.

Check the Double Click website for more meeting information.

<http://www.double-click.org>