

MUGGFiles

News and Views from the Macintosh Users Group of Guam

April 1999

Out of the closet...

Riddle me this: how many personal computers are thrown away each year? More than 10 million in the United States alone.

Ouch! But what *does* one do with the faithful, old LCII now that a new G3 has moved in? You can't stored the old boy in the closet forever....

One of the unwelcome by-products of today's technology explosion is the proliferation of out-dated but perfectly useful computers, monitors and peripherals.

While it's legal to toss the old gear into the Ordot Landfill, a little creative thinking will find you richer, your community smarter, and your closets a wee bit emptier.

True, maybe older machines can't handle the latest RAM-rich software and their processor speeds are probably

far, far from breaking the 400-megahertz barrier. But they are still adequate tools for web surfing, word processing, database building, and more.

The Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997 allows companies to donate personal computers, software and peripherals to schools in exchange for enhanced charitable deduction benefits. The gear must be in good working condition and less than two years old.

Charitable groups such as Goodwill Industries and Salvation Army will accept your donated hardware in exchange for a nice tax write-off for you. This also applies to other non-profit groups such as youth groups, organizations assisting the aged or the disabled, religious support organizations, and service clubs like MUGG.

Often the amount the donor can write-off on his or her taxes exceeds what the equipment could garner if sold. For example, a three-year-old Performa could easily earn a tax write-off worth \$600.

An online directory of agencies that facilitate the donation of used computers to schools and community groups can be found at < www.microweb.com/pepsite/Recycle/recycle_index.html >.

Also check these sites:

- East-West Education Development Foundation <www.fordwa.linkserve.org/edf.htm>
- National Cristina Foundation < www.cristina.org >
- Global Technology Foundation: P.O. Box 4861, Boulder, CO 80306 (303) 440-1115.

...and out into the world

Odi Diambra is a quiet family man best known for his amazing soccer talents, his work with Guam poultry farmers, and as a biology and French teacher.

But back home in his native country of Cote d'Ivoire, he is the main force behind GMSA, a small technical agricultural college. In addition to livestock husbandry, plant resources and farm management, the

African students are clamoring to learn about computers.

Because money is scarce, Odi turned to the Internet when faced with the challenge of outfitting his school's first-ever computer lab. His humble request for donations of older computer hardware was answered by companies and individuals throughout the world. Four computers alone from one company in New York City!

The challenge now is collecting the hardware, then packing and shipping it to Cote d'Ivoire. Older compatible software will also be needed.

Guam residents with ideas or interest in the project can contact Odi at odiambra@uog9.uog.edu. Learn more about GMSA at < www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Lounge/4886/index.html >.



Extending your Extension Know-how

by **Ed George**
from the **Internet**

What are extensions anyway?

If you've ever double-clicked on an extension, the Apple definition that appears says it all: "This file add functionality to your Macintosh..."

A perfect analogy is if the Mac were your house, extensions would be the things inside that make your life easier, from appliances to roof insulation. Some extensions you deal with on a daily basis; others you never think of. Examples of extensions include Quick Time, Adobe Type Manager, Open Transport, and the Disinfectant INIT.

Are there different types of extensions?

Extensions come in three varieties. The most common are System Extensions, the type mentioned above. The second type are Chooser Extensions, items that appear in the Chooser when it is opened. These can include printer, fax, scanner and networking drivers that allow your Mac to use specific pieces of hardware/software. The last type of extensions are Communications Tools, such as Apple Modem Tool or Serial Tool, and are used in conjunction with telecommunications software.

What is a Control Panel?

A Control Panel is very much like an extension: both are code that loads at startup and patches the system to add new functionality. The main difference is that Control Panels have a user interface, while extensions do not. Many times an Extension and a Control Panel will work together to provide a feature. For example, Open Transport. The TCP/IP Control Panel allows you to make changes to network settings that a host of Extensions make possible.

Do extensions use memory?

Yes, extensions (and control panels)

that use memory are the icons that line up along your screen at startup. If Xs or question marks appear over top of a specific icon, it usually means something has prevented it from loading during startup and its features will not be available. I mentioned control panels above because some have parts that load into memory during startup but are still controlled via a control panel (Adobe Type Manager and MacTCP are two).

Why do I need to startup my Mac with extensions off?

Extension conflicts are the most common system problems that occur and can be the easiest (or hardest) to solve if you know (or don't know) what to look for. A conflict occurs when two or more extensions compete for the same piece of memory or just don't get along well with each other. A perfect example is Adobe Type Manager, which always needs to be the last extension to load. If it doesn't, your Mac will usually hang or freeze, forcing you to restart. The best way to combat extension conflicts is the following:

1. Get Conflict Catcher® from Casady & Greene Software

This software is the definitive way to control extensions, control panels, startup/shutdown items, Apple menu items, and fonts. It allows you to make "sets" that load only what you choose. It provides information on what the extension does and how much memory it takes, and can even run a conflict test to try to isolate the problem for you. (Note: You can also use the free Extensions Manager from Apple, but it is not as powerful.)

2. When a problem occurs, note when it happens, what your Mac is doing, and what you were doing just before the problem. These things are crucial because if you just installed something or ran a new piece of software, an

extension might have been installed that is causing a conflict. This is where restarting with the extensions off (by holding down the shift key at startup) can solve your problem. If the problem disappears, you know it was probably an extension and can begin tracing the problem by looking at recently installed extensions. The bad news is the only way to solve an extension conflict is to remove or change the load order of a particular extension and see what happens. This involves restart after restart, a very time consuming problem.

3. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure — know what is going on with your Mac. By learning more about the system you have and what extensions are installed, you can determine which are needed and what they do. From there, you can begin removing unneeded extensions, thereby freeing up memory and increasing system performance.

MUGG's Who's Who

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The Heartbreak of MIME Attachments

By Joseph Schorr
MacWorld

It's all too familiar: a friend sent you an e-mail attachment. But your Mac can't open the file. Double-clicking on it brings up an error message. You ask for a new e-mail file to be sent, but you can't open that one either. You eventually open the file with your word processor, but all you see is pages of meaningless garbage characters.

That string of seemingly meaningless text isn't garbage – it's code. To ensure the attachment's safe passage over the Internet, your friend's e-mail program encoded the file using an encryption scheme called MIME (Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions). MIME turned the file into a string of text characters. Unfortunately, your e-mail program failed to decode the MIME file back into its original format. The good news: you can decode it yourself.

Why It Happened

Most e-mail systems are designed to handle plain-old ASCII characters. These text-based systems use 7 bits of data to specify each character. But many files – such as graphics, databases, and movies – contain more than plain text. The data packed into such files is stored in a binary format that uses 8 bits to define each morsel of information.

So how do you transmit 8-bit data through a 7-bit system? That's where encoding comes in. Encoding schemes use an encryption system that represents each hunk of 8-bit binary data as a string of plain-old ASCII text – text that can travel intact across any file server, through any mail gateway, and into any e-mail program, regardless of platform. When an encoded file arrives at its destination, it's up to your e-mail program to detect the encoding system used and convert the file back into its original binary form. That's what usually happens, behind the scenes,

without your even knowing about it.

However, sometimes the particular encoding system used by the sender isn't supported by the recipient's mail program. The result is that files arrive in their encoded state.

Three types of encoding are common: MIME, UUencode, and BinHex. On Mac systems, the most popular encoding scheme is BinHex. UUencoding is an older scheme with Unix origins (the UU stands for Unix-to-Unix). The most popular system is MIME, which is also called Base64.

How to Fix It

Fixing a file that arrives in its encoded state is usually a simple drag-and-

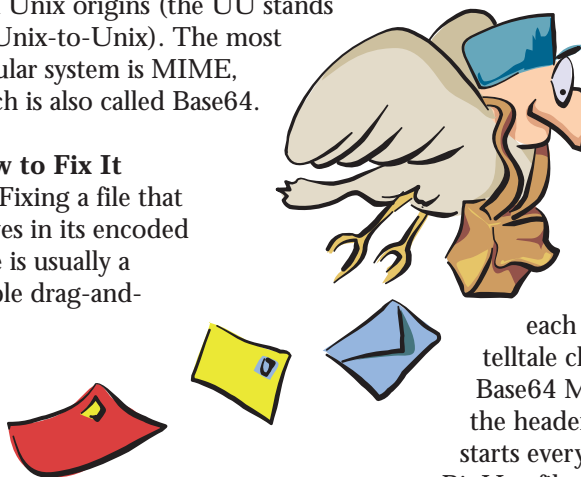
drop affair. You can assemble a pretty comprehensive decoding kit without spending much money. Use the freeware StuffIt Expander to open BinHex files (usually tagged with a .hqx suffix) and to decompress .sit files. Add the \$30 shareware DropStuff with Expander Enhancer and now you can decoding/decompress UUencoded files (usually tagged with a .uu suffix) as well as a number of compression formats, including .zip, .z, .gz, and .ARC files.

If you're willing to assemble an arsenal of smaller, specialized tools, you can spend even less – in fact, nothing – to decode attachments. Open UUencoded, BinHex, and Base64 files with Laurent Hagimont's free utility, uucd. Crack open MIME files with Brian Clark's YA Base64 or John Myers's Mpack, both freeware. Finally, you can use A.P. Maika's freeware UnZip 5.32 to tackle zipped files from

PC users. These indispensable utilities are available from Macdownload at Macworld Online. With most of them, you simply drag the files onto the icon of the appropriate utility to launch the decoding process.

How do you determine which utility to use? Usually, a file's name provides a clue. UUencoded files may end with .uu; Base64 files may end with .MIME. Often, though, the suffix is missing; in that case, you have to do some detective work. One easy way to figure out the encoding method used is to open the file in question with a word processor – remember, encoded files are just strings of plain text, and each type of encoding has telltale characteristics. For example, Base64 MIME file will say it is so in the header; a files that's UUencoded starts every line with the letter M; BinHex files always contain a line at the top that says the file must be converted with BinHex.

It may take several rounds of decoding, decompressing, and deciphering to tame the attachments that show up in your in-box, but with a few of the right tools and a little perseverance, you'll never feel victimized by MIME again.



Transition time!

New creative team needed for MUGG Files newsletter and MUGG web site! Contact Linda at 472-4221 or laustin@kuentos.guam.net.

MUGG's best-kept secret

Free want-ads for members via the newsletter and web site. If you have items for sale or trade or are looking for specific hardware or software, contact Linda for ad placement, 472-4221 or laustin@kuentos.guam.net.

Annual memberships are \$25 (prorated from February) for individuals or families, \$10 for students. New members receive a free CD-ROM! We meet on the second Saturday of the month from 1-3 p.m. usually at the University of Guam, College of Education's A-V Room. Check our web sites for details!

Our web site

<http://www.guam.net/pub/mugg>

Our e-mail mugg@kuentos.guam.net

Our snail mail

MUGG, UOG Station, University of Guam, Mangilao, GU 96923

JOIN US!

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

Village and Zip Code _____

E-mail Address _____

Phone _____



Getting a little artful in April

We're going visual this month and fulfilling some member requests for demos.

In no particular order:

Linda Austin will talk about clip art, where to get it, how to use it, what kinds are available, and how to customize it to fit your special needs.

We're still sweet-talking, ah, er, negotiating with a wonderful would-be presenter to give us a little taste of MicroSoft's Power Point. This powerful tool is a blessing for busy business people, teachers and others in need of stylish electronic presentations.

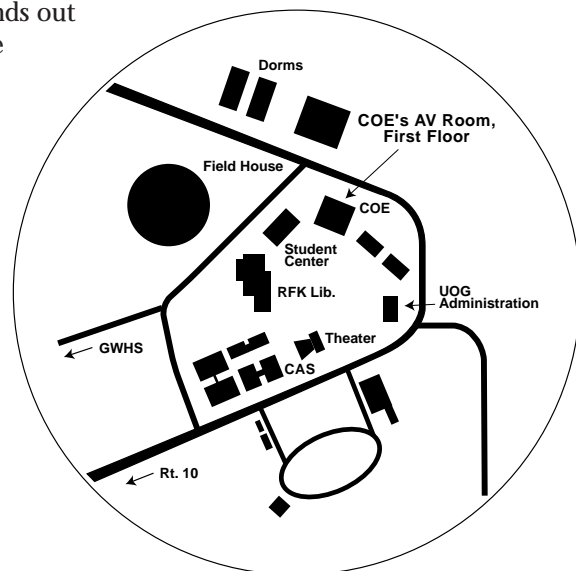
Helen O'Mallan comes forth with a demo on Kai's Power Soap, a photo-

manipulation program, and rounds out the afternoon with a dip into the software archives of our MUGG CD-ROM disk.

Don't forget our popular Swap 'N Shop and Q & A sessions.

When: Saturday,
April 10, 1-3 p.m.

Where:
College of Education
Building, AV lab
University of Guam



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