The Apple Core
Latest technical news

• Following record earnings this last quarter, Apple released numerous new products:

• First up was the *iMac* which you can now purchase in either a 21.5" or 27" widescreen, but the new models retain the current look. By default, they now come standard with wireless keyboards and mice (including the brand new multi-touch *Magic Mouse* which I hope to get my hands on and review soon). It's a great update if you're in the market for a new desktop.

• The *Mac mini* also received a minor update, meaning the only Desktop that didn't get updated was the *Mac Pro*.

• Fans of laptops will appreciate the new completely redesigned *MacBook*. It borrows a lot from it's 'Pro' siblings, with its unibody enclosure, multi-touch trackpad and a non-removable seven-hour battery to name but three and you should definitely have a look at it if you need a new laptop.

The Hardware Refresh Cycle
To help you time your Mac, iPod or iPhone purchase perfectly

Model	Last Updated	Recommendation
Mac Pro	3 Mar 2009	Nearing end of life cycle
Mac mini	20 Oct 2009	Buy now
iMac		
MacBook Air	9 Jun 2009	Mid product cycle
MacBook	20 Oct 2009	Buy now
MacBook Pro	9 Jun 2009	Mid product cycle
iPod shuffle	9 Sep 2009	Buy now
iPod nano		
iPod classic		
iPod touch		
iPhone	9 Jul 2009	Buy now

The Help Desk
Answering your most pressing technical questions

Q: I often receive documents from my office which even though they're PDFs come to me with the .dat extension. This isn't really a problem as I can change the file extension manually. I'm just getting tired of the dialogue box that pops up every time I do this, asking me for confirmation. Is there any way to remove this warning?

A: File extensions are part and parcel of working with computers. They tell us at a glance which program will most likely open it (i.e., .jpg opens in Preview, .doc in Word, .mov in QuickTime, etc.). Changing an extension can be dangerous as it alters the way your Mac handles the file: renaming a .doc file into a .gif file will make your computer attempt to open it using Preview instead of Word. Unfortunately, since it isn't a proper .gif file, Preview won't be able to open it, making you mistakenly think that the file is corrupt.

This is why, although you can modify the extension, you get a warning window asking you to confirm the change. Since this action is potentially destructive, the default button (the one you can activate by hitting the Return key) will cancel the alteration. Therefore if you have a genuine need to modify the extension, having to click on the 'Change' button each time can be tedious.

You'll be pleased to know though that it's possible to banish that warning: open the Finder's Preferences and click on the Advanced tab. Untick the 'Show warning before changing an extension' box and you'll now be able to alter extensions without your Mac bothering you again.

To submit your questions, send an email to
help@machelp.co.nz.

Safeguarding your Digital Life

Computers are so powerful and we can do so much with them that we tend to forget how vulnerable they can be. If your photos, documents, music or home movies are important to you, you should seriously consider backing them up.

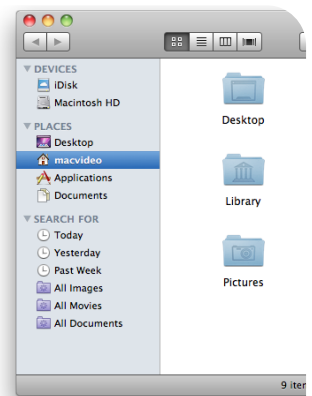Don't wait until it's too late. *Contact me* to find out how.

The Sidebar : *Always used but not often to the best of its ability*

Open a Finder window (by clicking on the blue face in the Dock, going to File > New Finder Window or using the ⇧-⌘-N keyboard shortcut) and you'll notice a column of icons to the left. This is the Sidebar. It is designed to grant you quick access to commonly used areas of your Mac like your Desktop, Applications or Documents folder: click on those links to be taken there immediately.

You can also see all drives connected to your computer and those even come with a handy 'Eject' button which you can use to remove them from your Desktop prior to physically disconnecting them from your Mac. Further down are common searches to help you find any items you may have worked on today, or see a list of all your Movies or Documents, for instance.

But did you know that the Sidebar is just as customisable as your Dock? You can reorder existing items by dragging them up or down. If you don't like one, drag it out of the window and release the mouse button for it to vanish in a puff of smoke (just like the Dock, these are not the actual items, merely signposts to them so removing those links won't make you lose any data).

Finally, if you'd rather see different items there, just drag a folder or document onto that section. Once you see a thin blue line in between two existing links, release the mouse button to add your item to the list. If you release the mouse while an existing item is highlighted in blue, what you're dragging will be put into it instead, but you can always cancel your action if that was a mistake thanks to Edit > Undo).

Steve Paris has had over 25 years experience in computers. He is an internationally published writer supplying articles, reviews and tutorials to the main Mac magazines worldwide. He is also an Apple Certified Trainer and provides consultancy, training and troubleshooting services to the Waitakere area. You can contact him on **09 817 4127**.