

# Default Mac Apps and What They Do

Ward Stanke  
PMUG—March 11, 2017

34 applications  
17 utilities

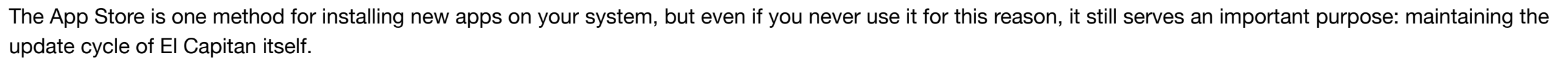
This presentation is inspired by and references some of the content from the MakeUseOf.com website article “A Complete Guide to Default Mac Apps and What They Do”

<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/complete-guide-default-mac-apps/>

by Joel Lee, September 30, 2016



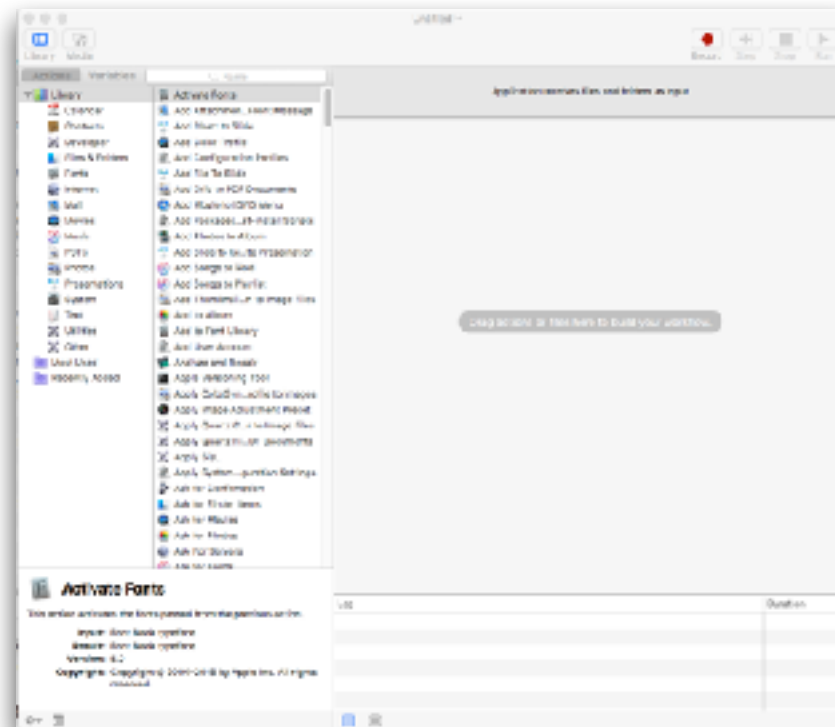
Applications



(Useful)



# Automator.app



This app provides a way for you to automate hundreds of different system actions that you can combine and use to perform complex tasks without any programming or scripting knowledge. Do you need it? Not really. Should you learn it? Absolutely.

(Very Useful)



# Calculator.app

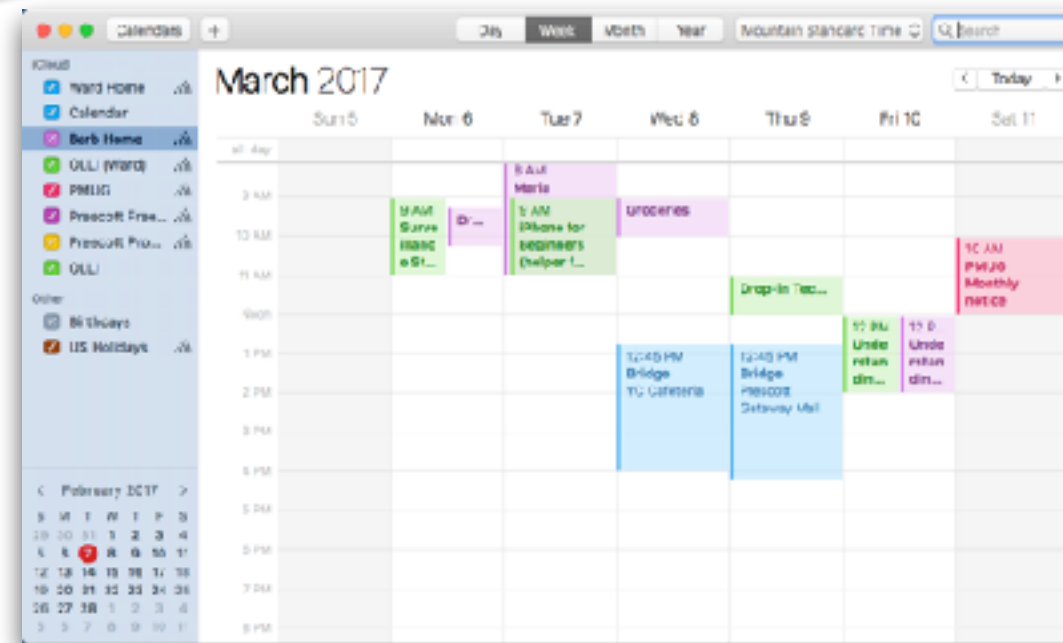


I personally use this app on a daily basis, whether to update my personal budgets, calculate estimated tax payments, or just offload whatever bit of mental math I don't feel like doing at the moment — but it's often faster to use Spotlight's instant math feature instead.

(Useful)



# Calendar.app

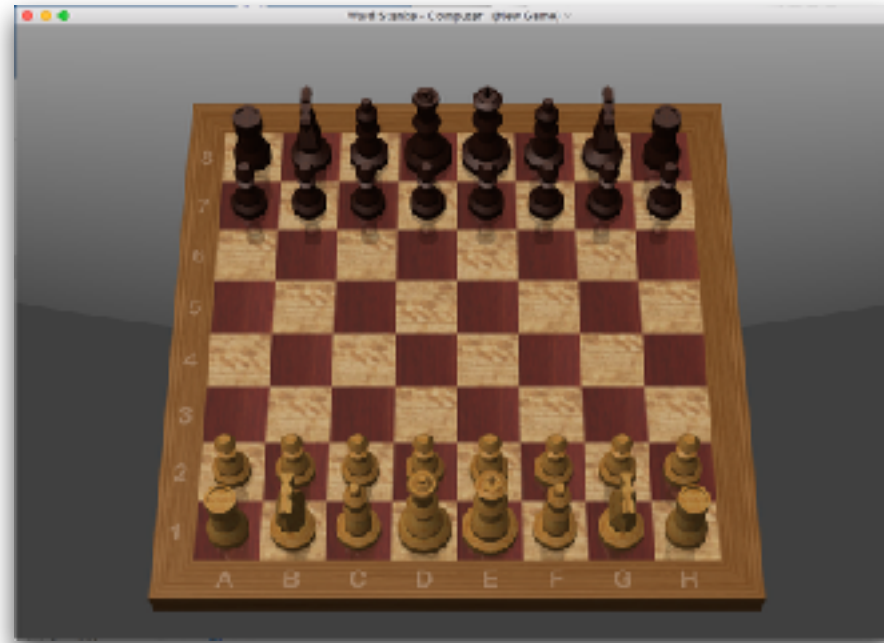


This app is a clean and efficient way to manage your day-to-day tasks. It may not be the most advanced calendar app out there, but it's more than enough for most users who aren't, say, running a small business. Syncs with iCloud.

(Very Useful)



# Chess.app



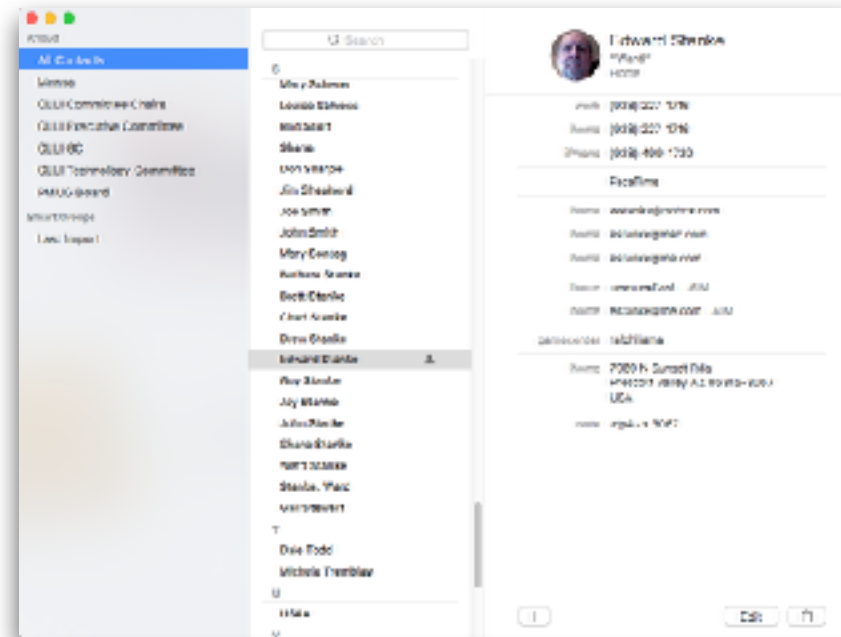
Why is Chess a system application in Mac? Furthermore, why did Apple think it was necessary to protect it with System Integrity Protection? But I digress. Chess is just a straightforward offline-only chess app.

(Not Useful)





# Contacts.app



This app is essentially a digital Rolodex that stores contact information on your friends, family members, and acquaintances. It syncs with iCloud, allowing the information to be used in other iCloud apps like Mail.

(Useful)

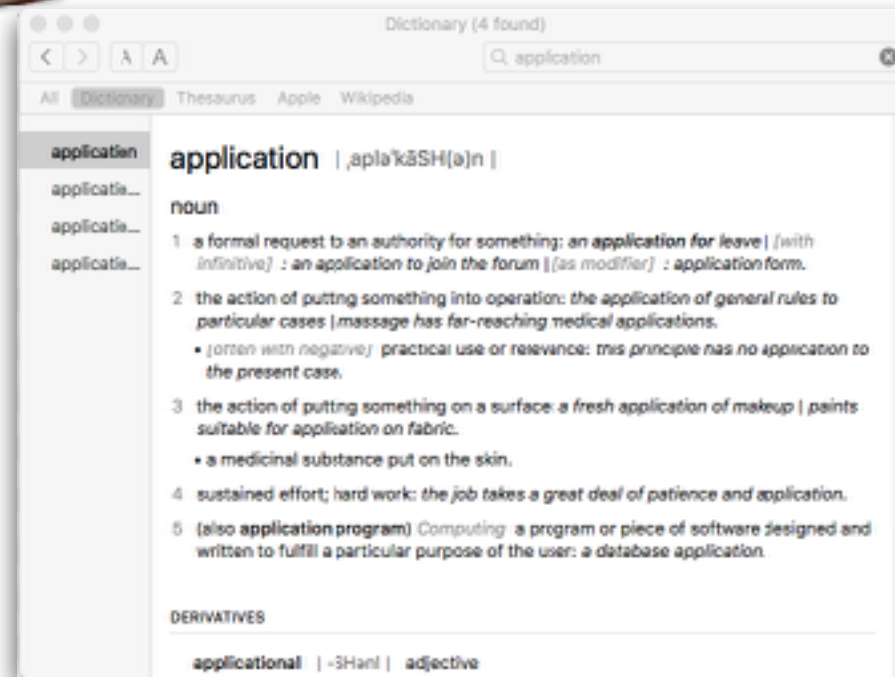


Dashboard provides a central screen that you can load up with widgets. A widget is like an interactive “mini-app” that only resides on Dashboard, like a calendar viewer or a weather forecast. And yes, you can install third-party widgets if you want.

(Useful)



# Dictionary.app



A simple but potentially useful app if you ever need access to a dictionary, thesaurus, or Wikipedia. Provided by the New Oxford American Dictionary and Oxford American Writer's Thesaurus, respectively. I personally never use it.

(Useful)



# DVD Player.app



This app may as well be obsolete. Modern Macbooks, iMacs, and other Apple machines don't come equipped with DVD drives anymore, so DVD Player is only useful if you have something like an external DVD drive. Besides, apps like VLC can handle DVD playback anyway.

(Not Useful)



# FaceTime.app

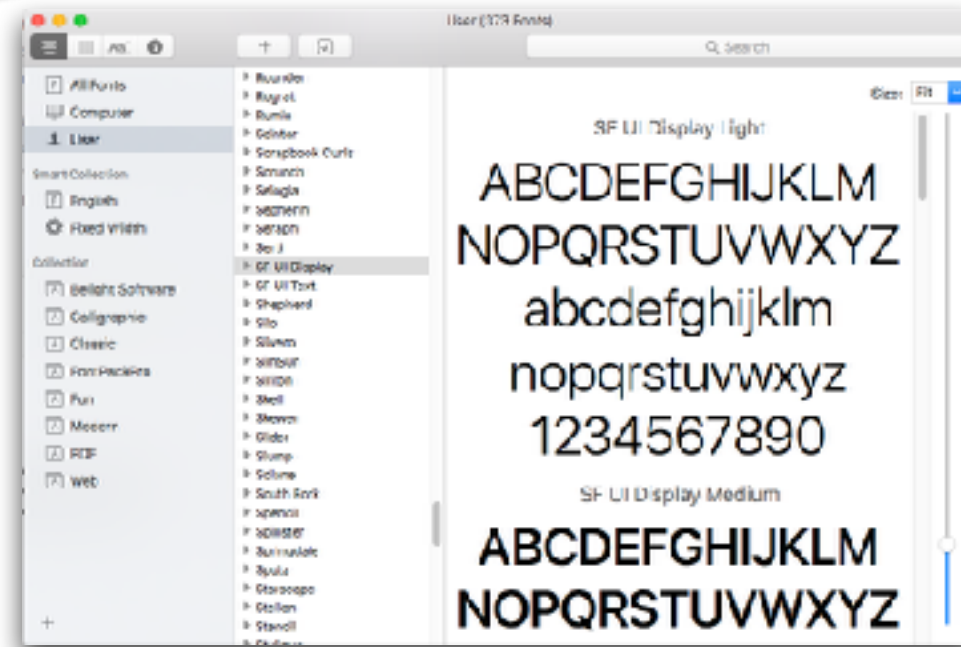


FaceTime is basically the Apple version of a more streamlined Skype: you can initiate and receive both audio calls and video calls with other FaceTime users. Unfortunately this means you can only use this between Apple devices. If you have friends or family on Windows or Android, you'll need Skype, Google Hangouts, and so on.

(Useful)



# Font Book.app

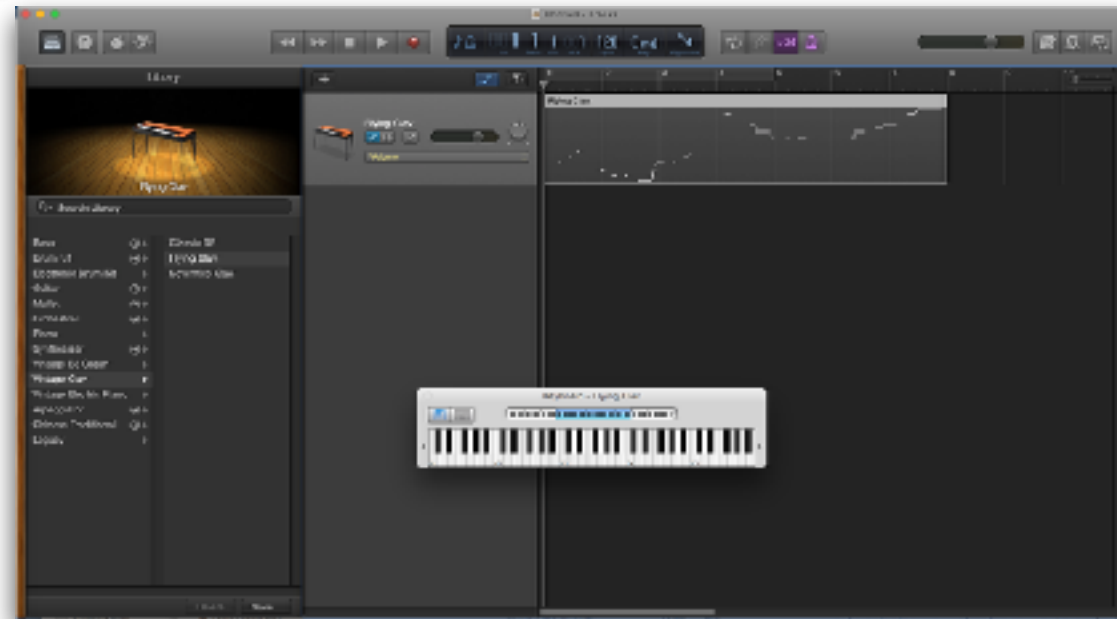


Unlike in Windows or Linux, Mac comes with a built-in font management utility that makes it a breeze to install, preview, and delete font families from your system. I like it because I'm a big font freak and Font Book can separate system fonts from user-installed fonts, making it easier to know what I've installed.

(Very Useful)



# GarageBand.app

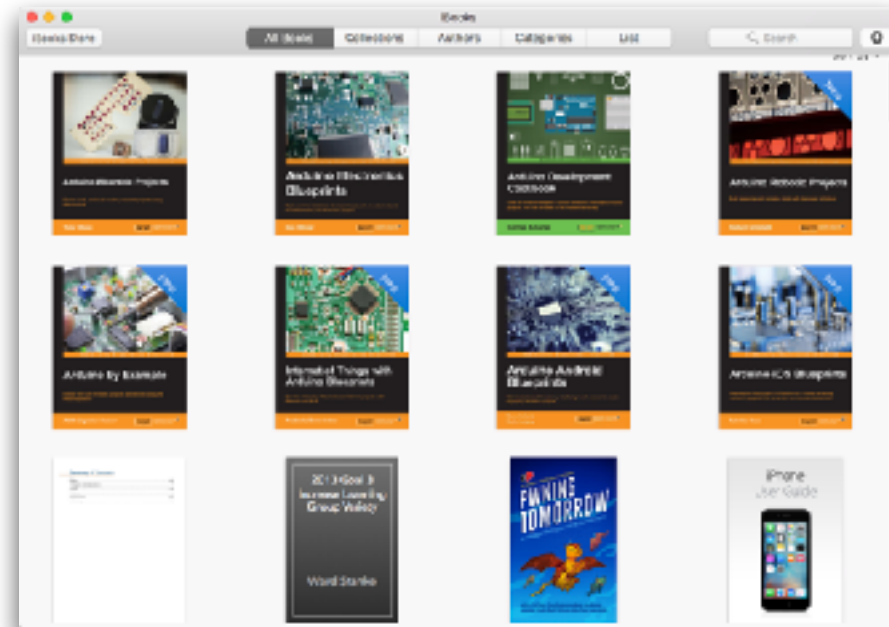


A simple and intuitive music studio that you can use to create loops, music, or even podcasts. A lot of new musicians use this as a stepping stone to more complex apps like Logic Pro X, and it's so useful that this app alone is one reason why some Windows users convert to Mac in the first place.

(Useful)



# iBooks.app



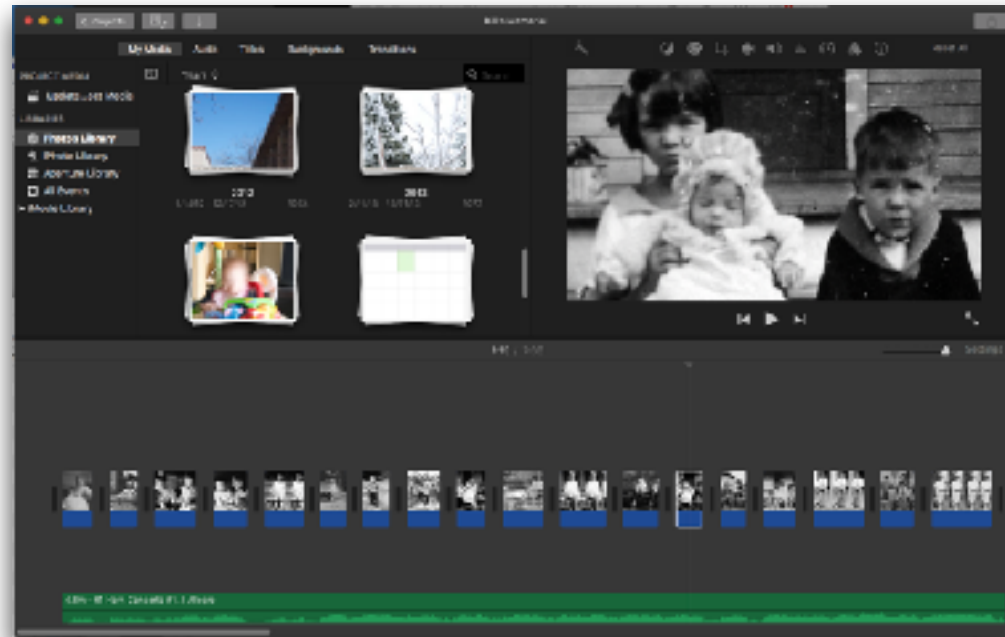
iBooks is like iTunes for ebooks. It comes with a built-in store where you can purchase thousands of titles (including recent mainstream releases) or you can import your own if you have ebooks on your system. I primary use it as an ebook reader and manager — and I love it because it's both simple and beautiful. Supports both EPUB and PDF formats.

(Useful)



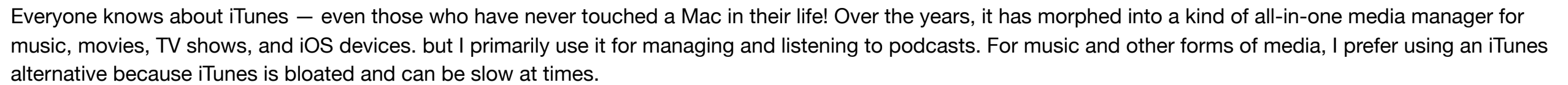


# iMovie.app



A simple and intuitive movie editor that you can pretty much think of as “GarageBand for movies”. You can import raw clips and images, edit them together, and polish off with text, music, and basic post-processing effects. You’d be surprised by how many YouTube videos were made using iMovie!

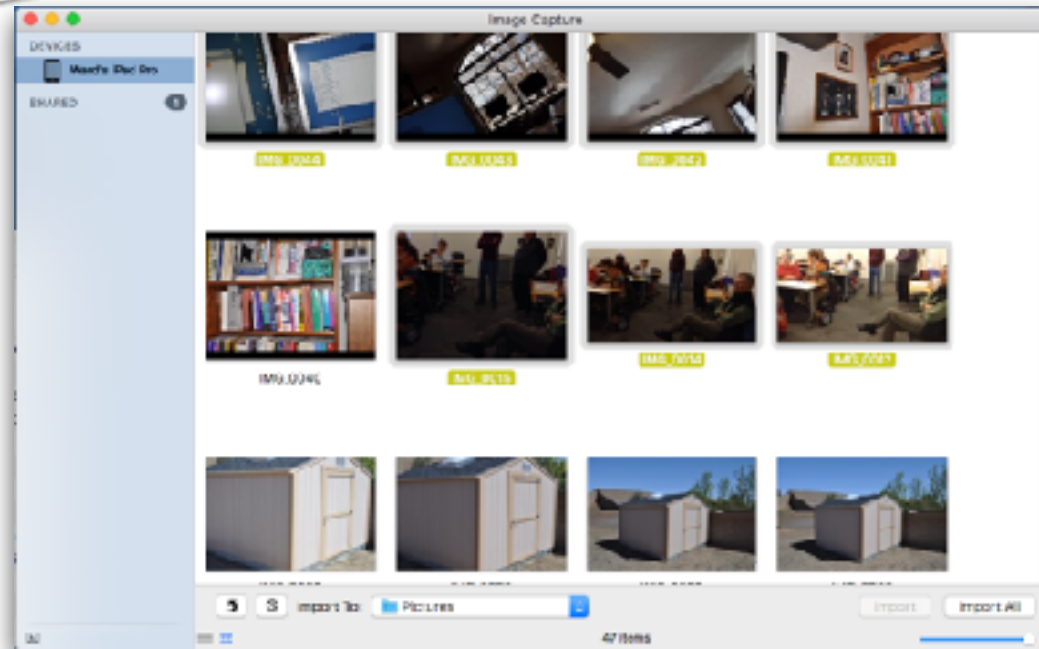
(Useful)



(Useful)



# Image Capture.app

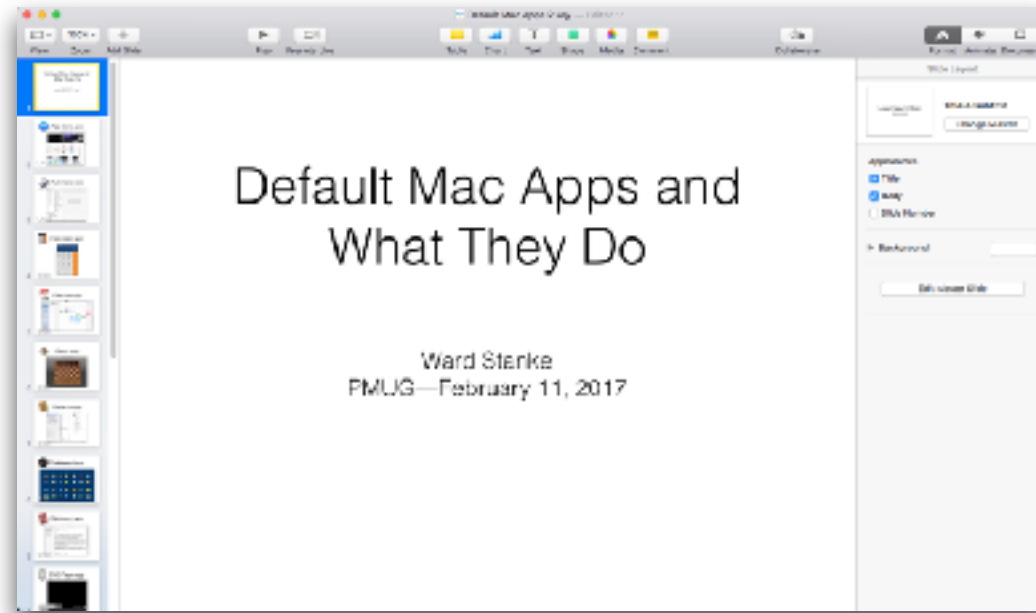


If you have a scanner or camera connected to your computer, you can use Image Capture to take images. Some older digital cameras may rely on an app like Image Capture to import directly from the device, but most now have Wi-Fi sharing (or you can just pop the SD card into your reader).

(Not Useful)



# Keynote.app



Keynote is Apple's answer to Microsoft PowerPoint. With it, you can create all kinds of interesting presentations ranging from simple and elegant to complex and advanced, especially once you've learned a few tricks of the trade. It can import and export to PowerPoint formats, so no need to worry about compatibility.

(Useful)



# Launchpad.app

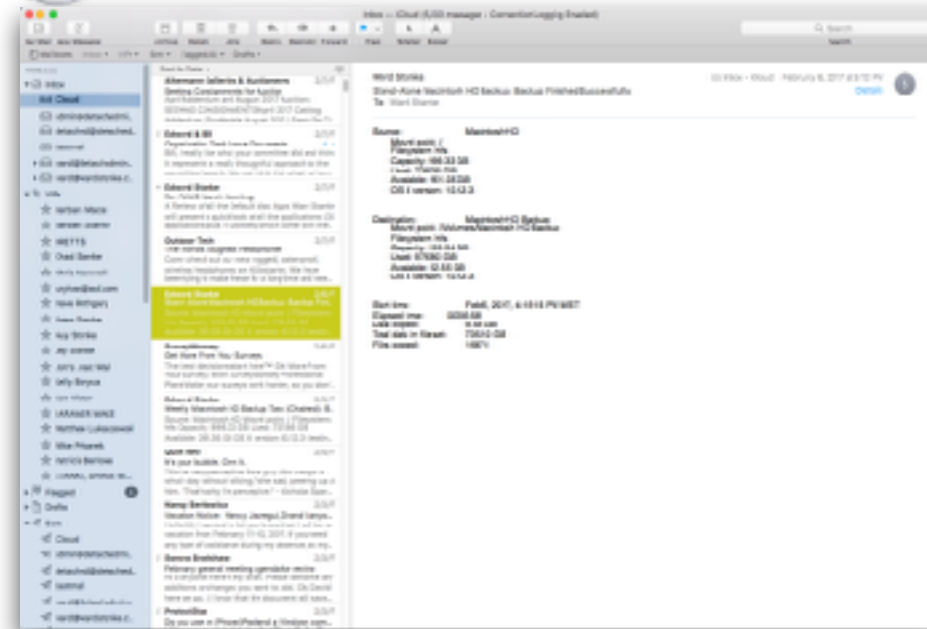


Launchpad was added as a way to unify the experience between iOS and Mac, but I'm not sure this was necessary. Its primary function is to help you find and launch apps, but Spotlight can do the same thing (and Spotlight is objectively better in every way, especially because it can find lost files in a heartbeat). You can access launchpad by hitting F4, or pinching with four or more fingers on a trackpad.

(Not Useful)

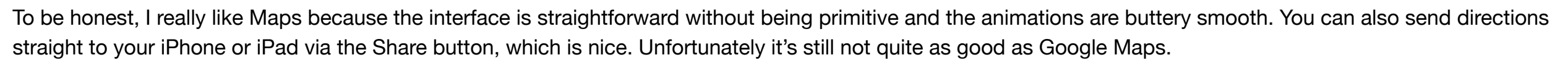


# Mail.app



The default app for handling email accounts and inboxes. It's actually quite good if you ask me, but I don't use it because there are a few interface quirks that I don't like. Instead, I use Postbox as an alternative mail client, but lots of people use Mail and love it.

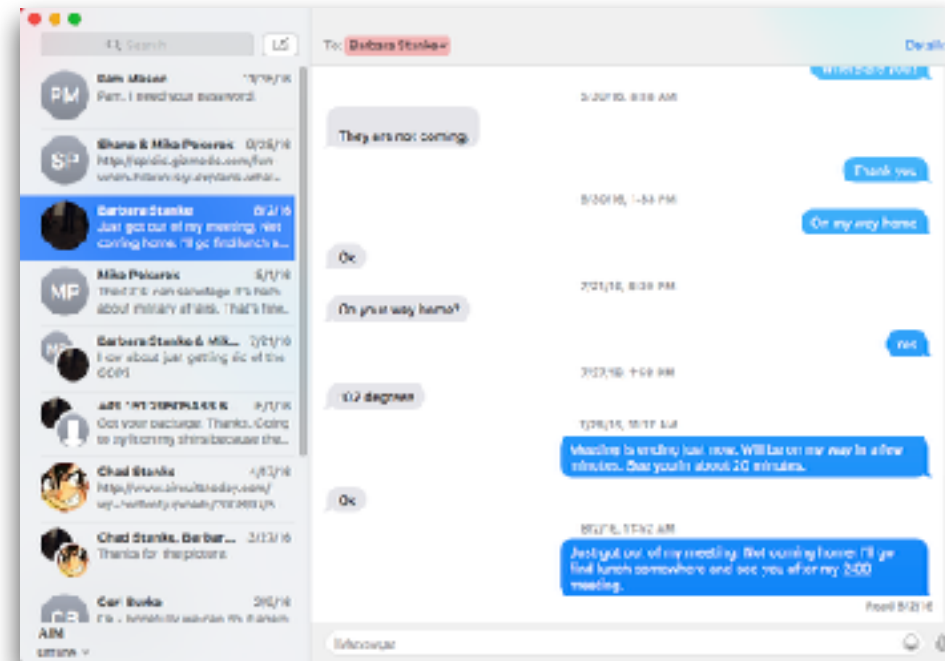
(Useful)



(Useful)



# Messages.app



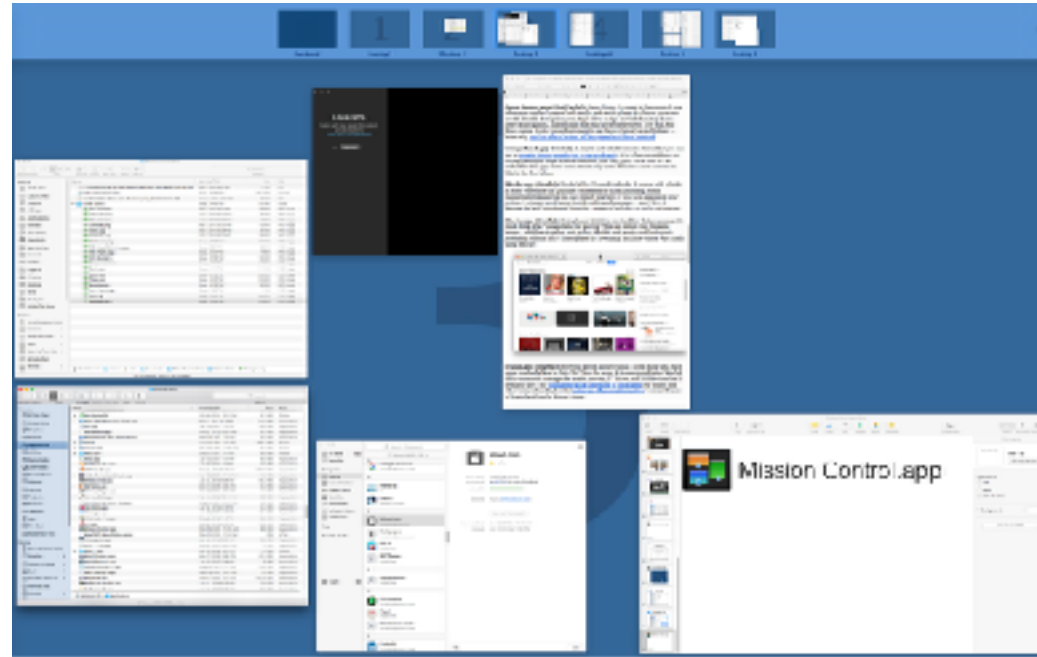
Messages lets you send and receive unlimited text messages with other iMessage users, and these messages can include photos, audio clips, and other kinds of files. It's most useful if you have a lot of Apple fan friends, but you can get it to work with Jabber and a few other IM protocols if you want.

(Useful)





# Mission Control.app

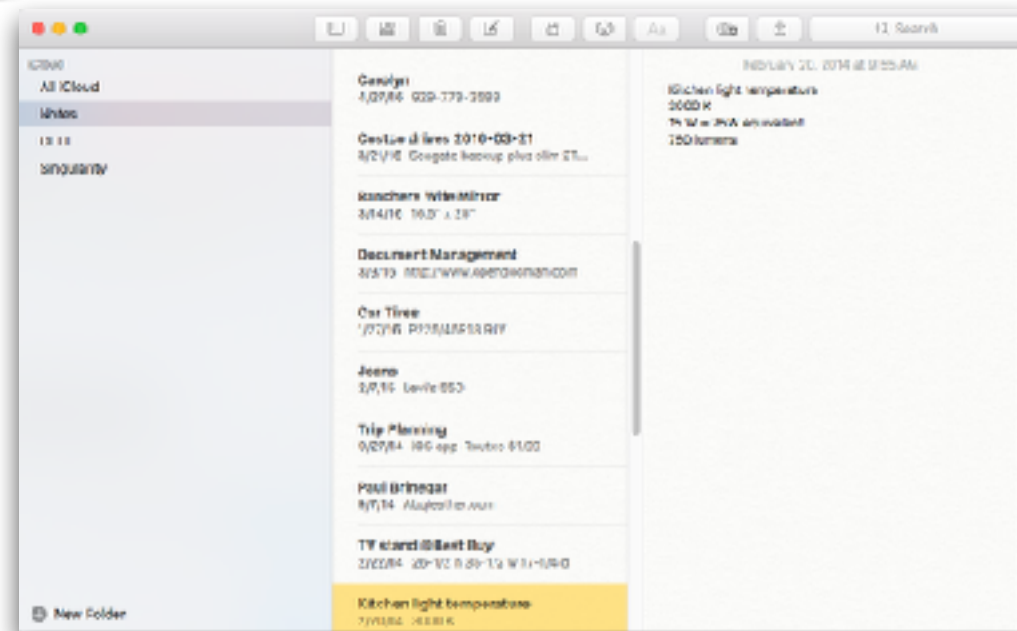


When you activate Mission Control, everything “zooms out” so you can see all of your active apps at once. This makes it really easy to switch from one app to another without command+tabbing a bunch of times, especially if you have ten or more apps open. It’s also great for managing multiple virtual desktops, which every Mac user should be doing.

(Very Useful)

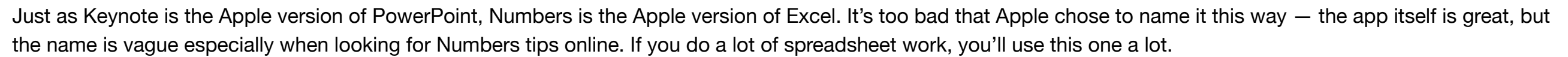


# Notes.app



Though Evernote and OneNote are the two reigning kings of digital note-taking, Apple Notes is catching up. It integrates with iCloud so it's the best option if you use both Mac and iOS, otherwise you may want to stick with a more cross-platform option.

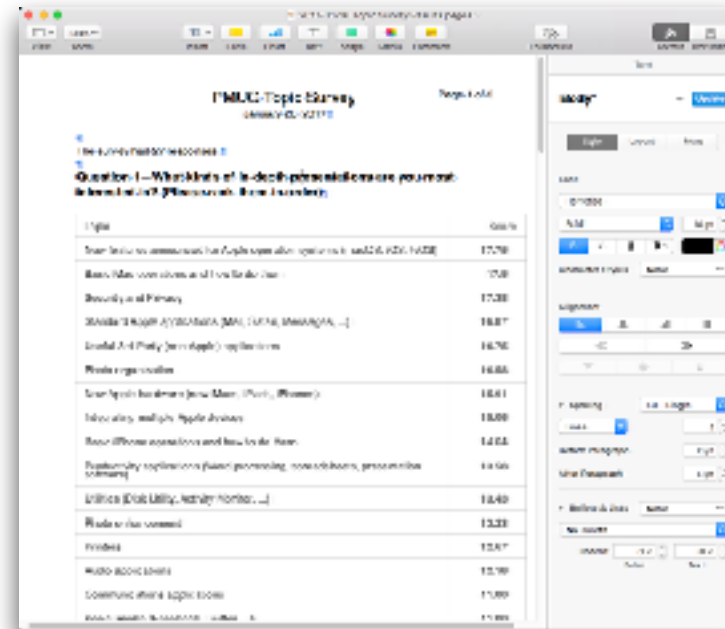
(Useful)



(Useful)



# Pages.app

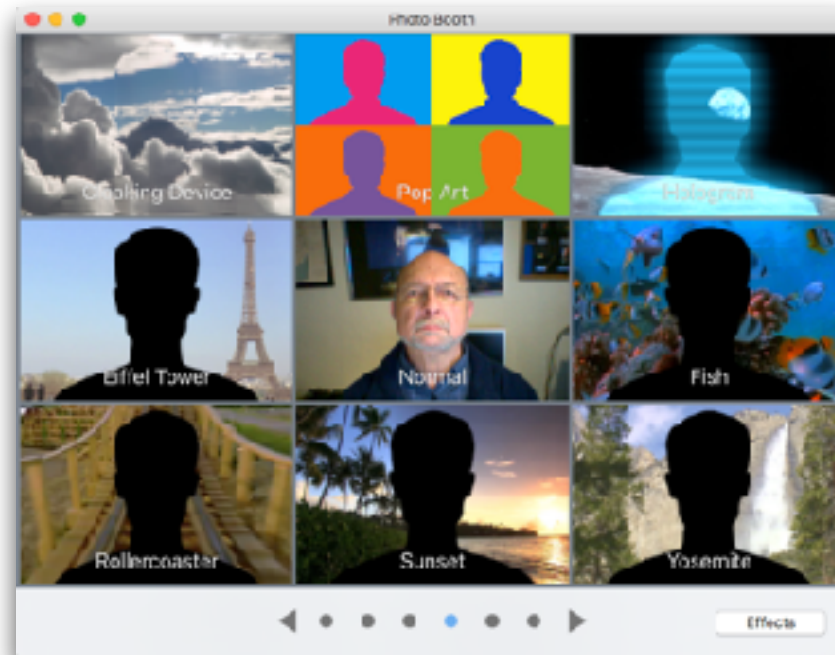


Here we have Apple's answer to Microsoft Word and the trend holds true here: simple, straightforward, but nowhere near as feature-rich. It's fantastic for getting words on a page — and that's more than enough for most — but if you need a full-blown word processor, you may want to opt for one of these paid alternatives instead.

(Useful)



# Photo Booth.app

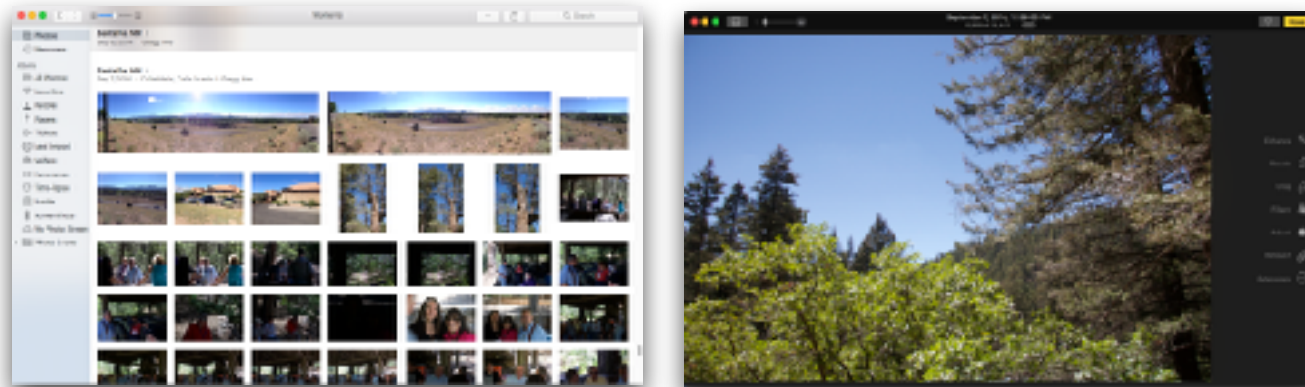


Need to take a photo or video of yourself? Photo Booth can do that using your Mac's built-in camera, or an externally-connected camera, in three modes: single photo, four quick photos, or a movie clip. You can also add over 20 different effects if you want to have some fun.

(Useful)



# Photos.app

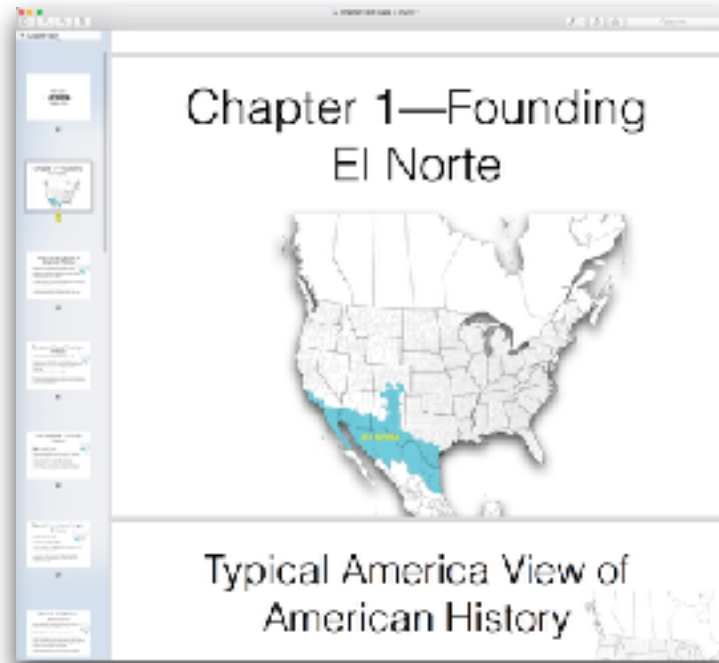


A central library that makes it easy to organize and manage your photos and videos. It won't take photos or videos (use Photo Booth for that) but it's great for storing albums and creating "projects" like slideshows, prints, cards, and so on. It can even edit RAW files, but serious photographers should still consider using Lightroom instead.

(Useful)



# Preview.app



If you view a lot of images or regularly read PDF documents, then prepare to use Preview often. It can also handle other file types, including raw camera output, PowerPoint presentations, and Photoshop PSDs. Note that there are some cool Preview tricks you should master (like splitting and merging PDFs).

(Very Useful)



# QuickTime Player.app



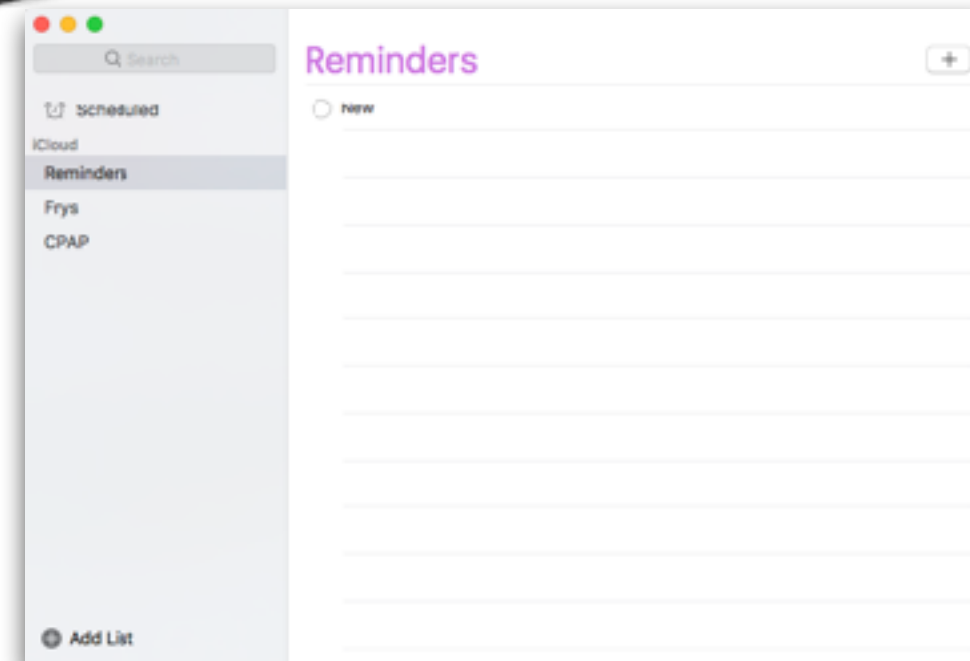
Not only is this the default video player for Mac, QuickTime Player comes with a lot of other useful functionality as well, including the ability to record audio, record your screen, splice videos, and upload to YouTube.

(Useful)





# Reminders.app



You might think Reminders is an alarm app — which isn't untrue since it does have alarm functionality — but it's actually a to-do list app. Create multiple lists with multiple items in each list, then set alarms on individual items if you wish (according to time or when you enter a location). It syncs to iOS devices through iCloud, can be used for recurring alerts too.

(Useful)



# Safari.app

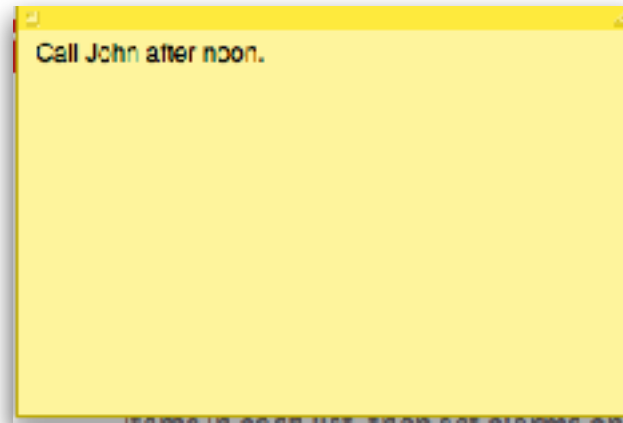


Safari is Mac's window to the internet. A lot of people recommend choosing Chrome over Safari, but there are several good reasons why you shouldn't use Chrome on a Mac. As for me, I'm a big fan of Opera even though it has flaws compared to other browsers.

(Very Useful)



# Stickies.app



Stickies lets you create and maintain “sticky notes” that sit on your desktop. This concept was really popular back in the early 2000s, but now that we have dedicated notes apps like Evernote and its alternatives as well as smartphone-based reminders, Stickies is little more than unnecessary clutter.

(Not Useful)



# TextEdit.app



Though it's often described as a “word processor”, TextEdit is more like Notepad than Word — and for simple text editing, there are so many better and more powerful alternatives that nobody should be using TextEdit anymore. My editor of choice? Sublime Text.

(Not Useful)



# Time Machine.app



Knowing how to use Time Machine is a MUST for any and all Mac users. This app makes it easy to migrate your personal data to a fresh Mac installation, or it can restore your system to a previous point if something ever goes catastrophically wrong.

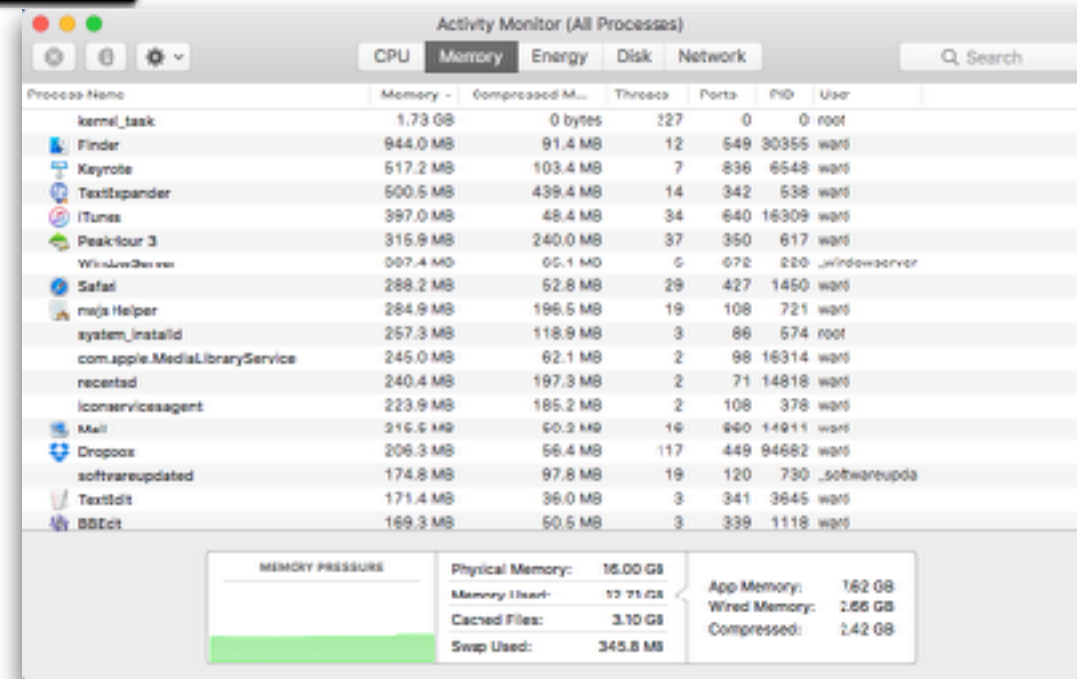
(Very Useful)



Utilities



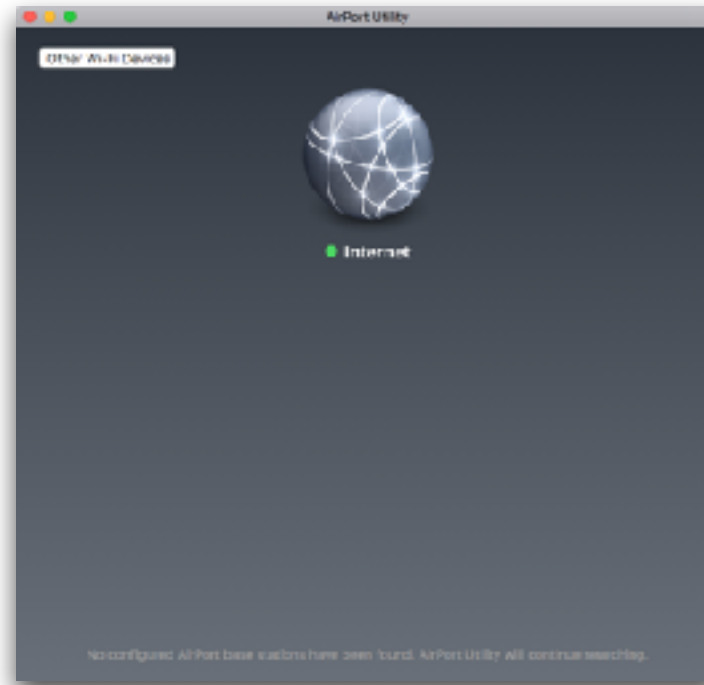
# Activity Monitor.app



Similar to Task Manager on Windows but more in depth. View everything from CPU usage per process to total RAM availability, from energy impact per process to overall network activity. It's one of the most important built-in system utilities.



# AirPort Utility.app

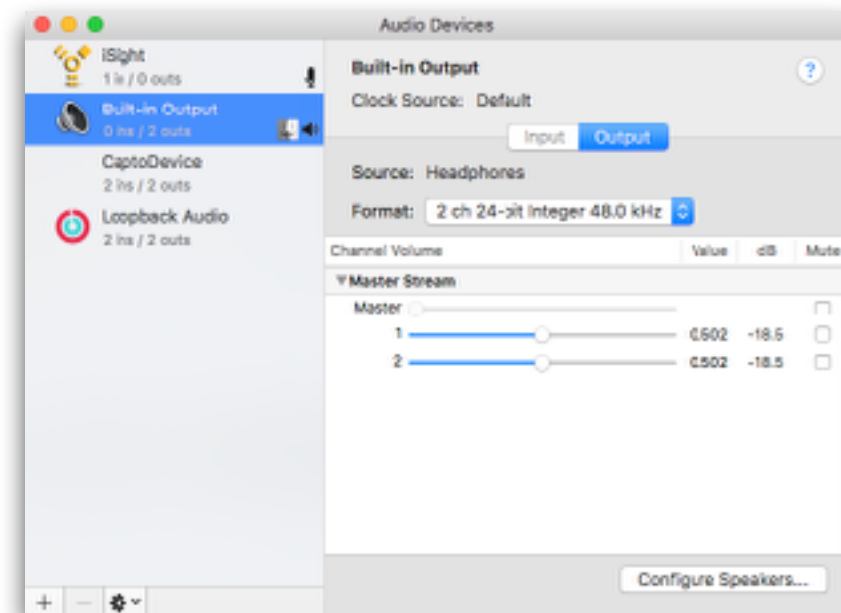


Used to set up and manage AirPort base stations (AirPort Express, AirPort Extreme, and AirPort Time Capsule), which are basically Apple's proprietary line of Wi-Fi cards and routers.





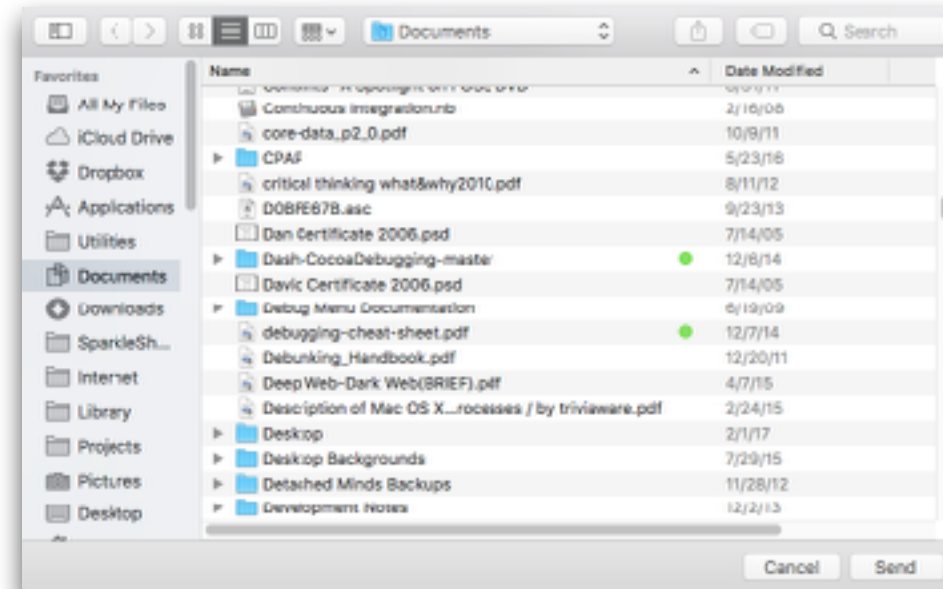
# Audio MIDI Setup.app



Set up and manage audio devices on your system.



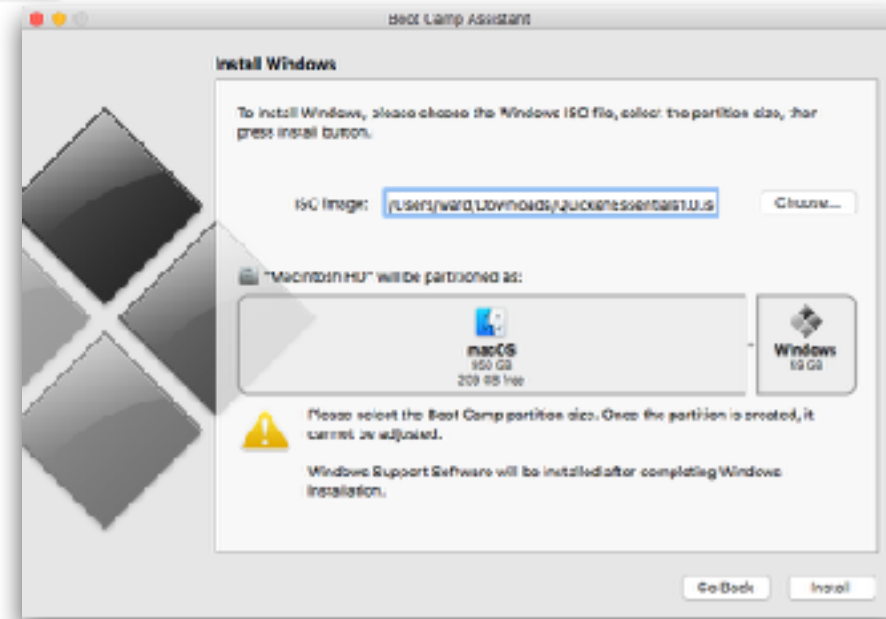
# Bluetooth File Exchange.app



Set up and manage Bluetooth connections with nearby compatible devices.



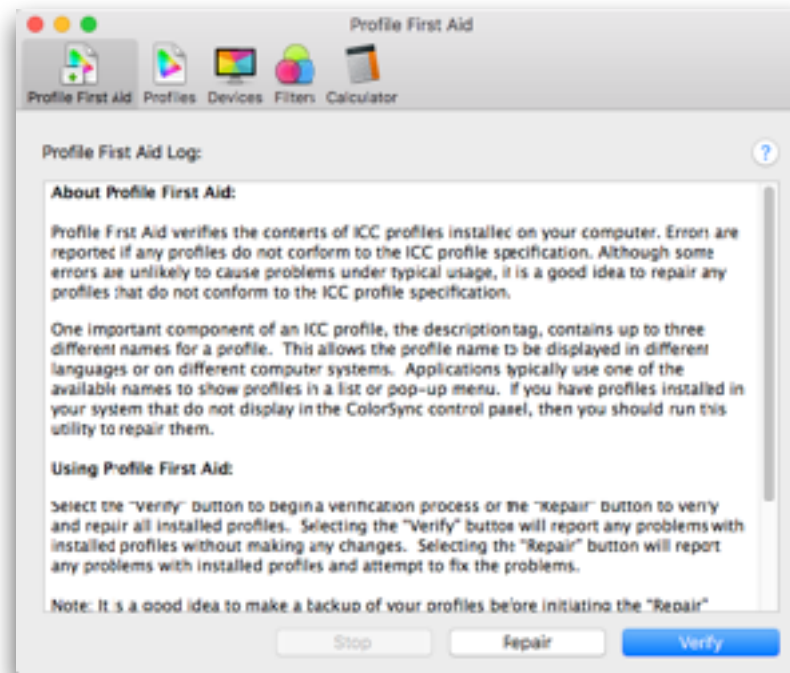
# Boot Camp Assistant.app



Set up and manage a dual-boot configuration, allowing your system to boot into either Mac or Windows. It's the preferred method for getting Windows on your system.



# ColorSync Utility.app



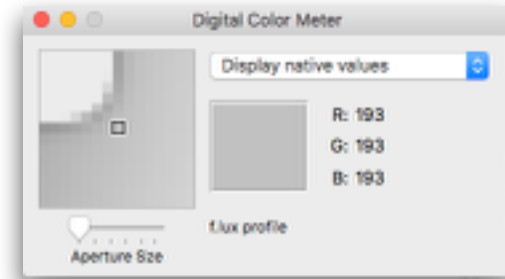
Grants finer controls over the color display and color profiles of your system. If your colors look off and you sure it isn't caused by a color-shifting app like F.lux, then you may want to tinker around with it.

# Console.app





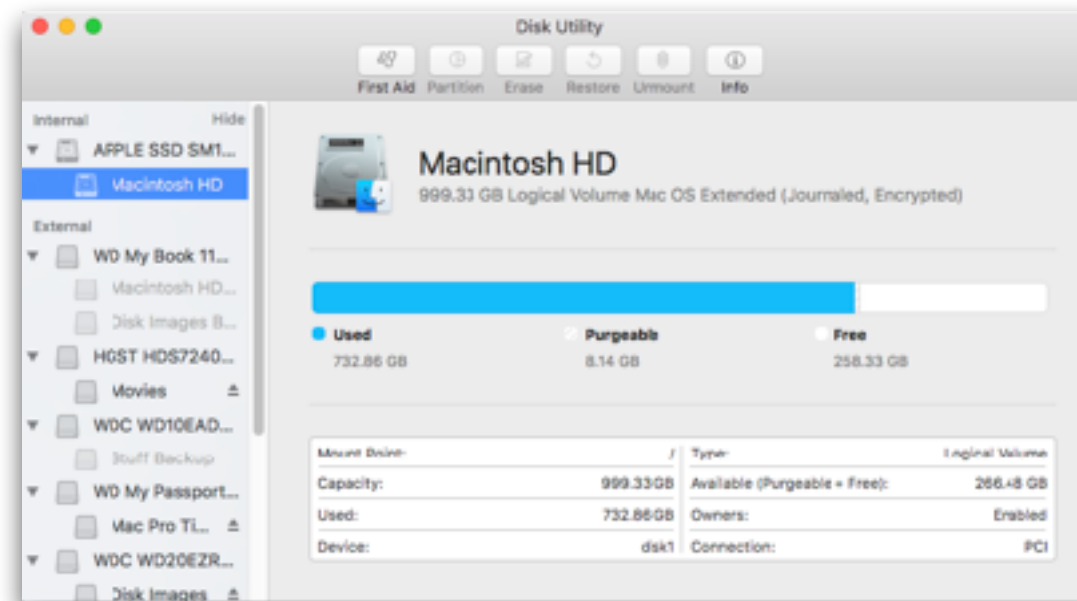
# Digital Color Meter.app



A nifty utility that displays the color value of any pixel on your screen. Color values can even be displayed in other formats such as Adobe RGB.



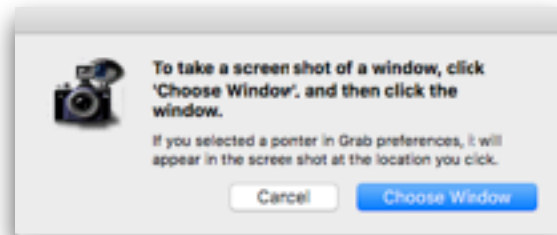
# Disk Utility.app



A tool that gives you basic information and control over your disk drives. It's the recommended way to erase disk drives, including USB and external drives.

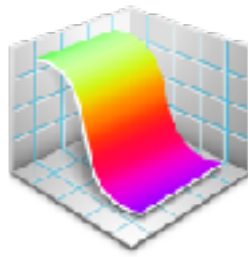


# Grab.app

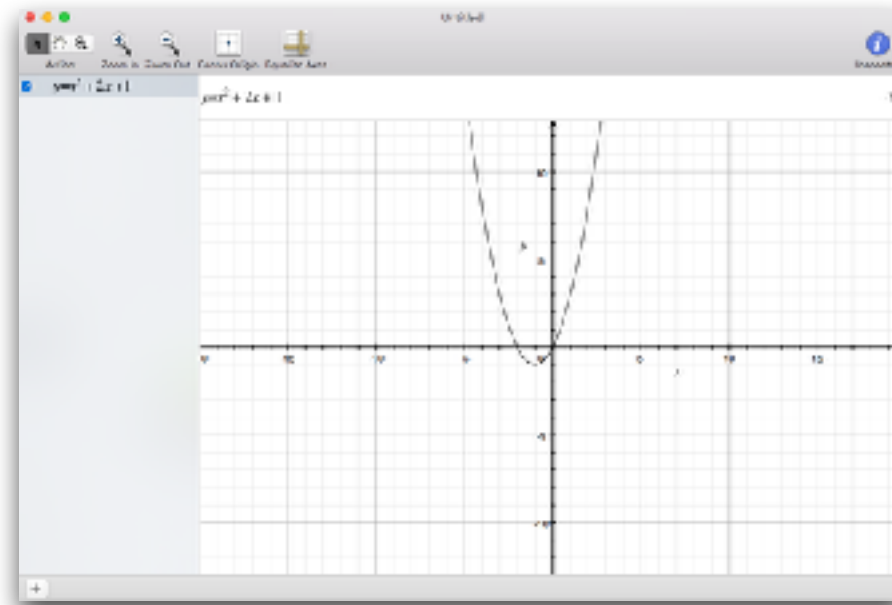


Takes screenshots. While it isn't as useful anymore because Mac has system-wide screenshot keyboard shortcuts, Grab does come in handy for its "Timed Screenshot" option which has a 10-second delay.

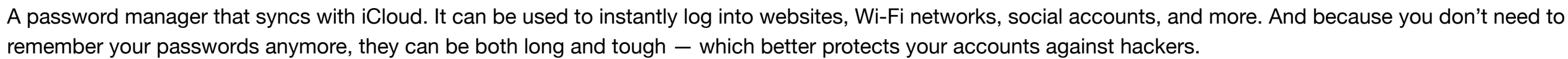


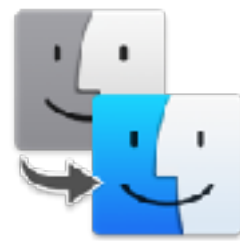


# Grapher.app

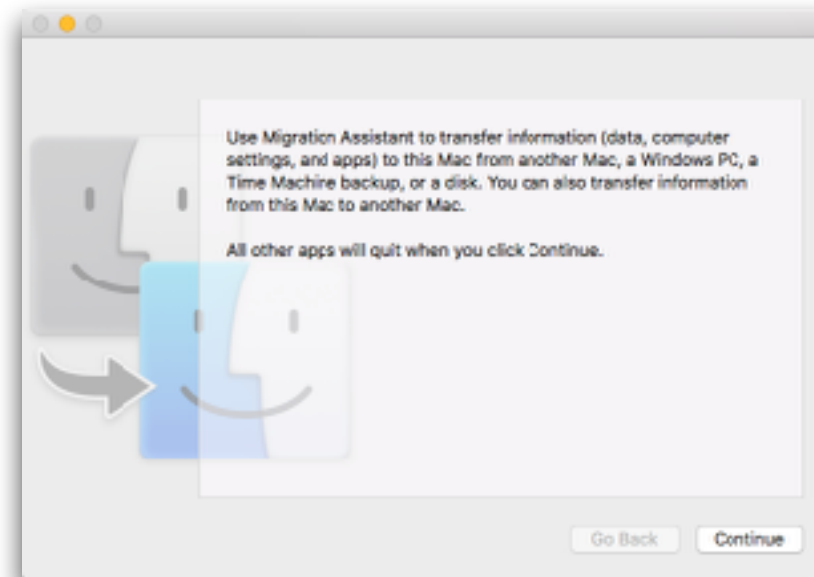


Enter one or more mathematical equations and Grapher will graph them for you.





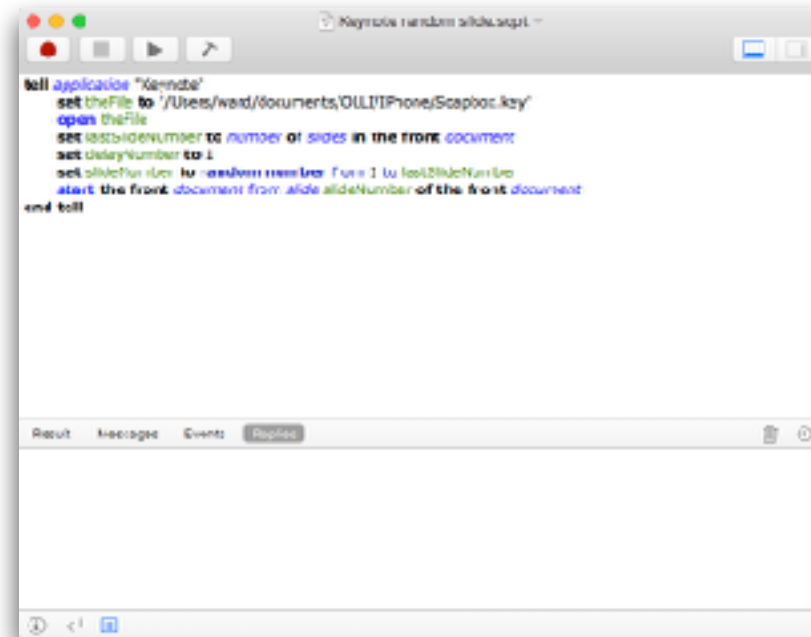
# Migration Assistant.app



A quick wizard for migrating your personal data onto your current system, either from another Mac, another PC, another drive, or a Time Machine backup.



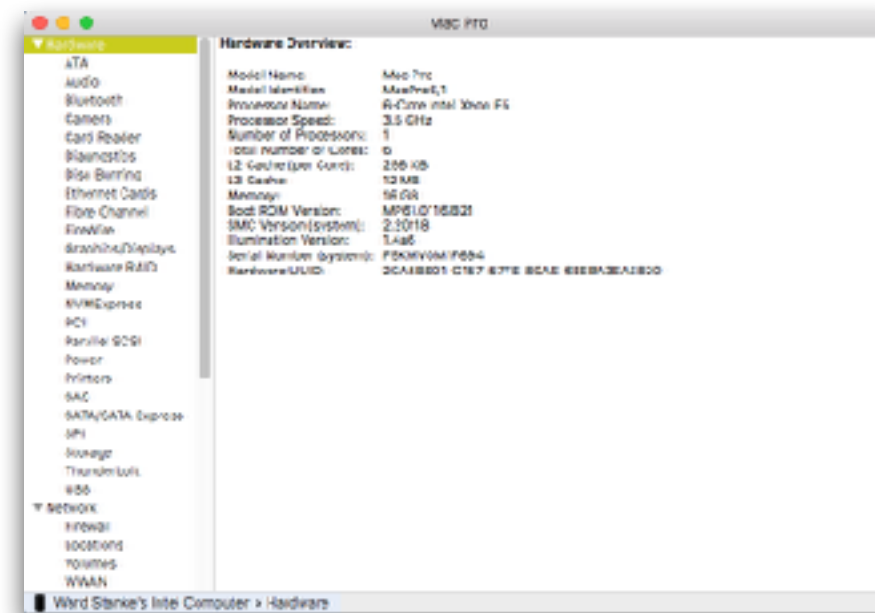
# Script Editor.app



Lets you create AppleScript scripts, which can perform complex tasks involving apps on your system or the system itself. It's frequently used for task automation as it's more powerful (but also more advanced) than Automator.



# System Information.app



Provides deep level information involving the hardware, software, and network of your system. For example, if you want to know the manufactured part number of your RAM modules, this is where you'd look.



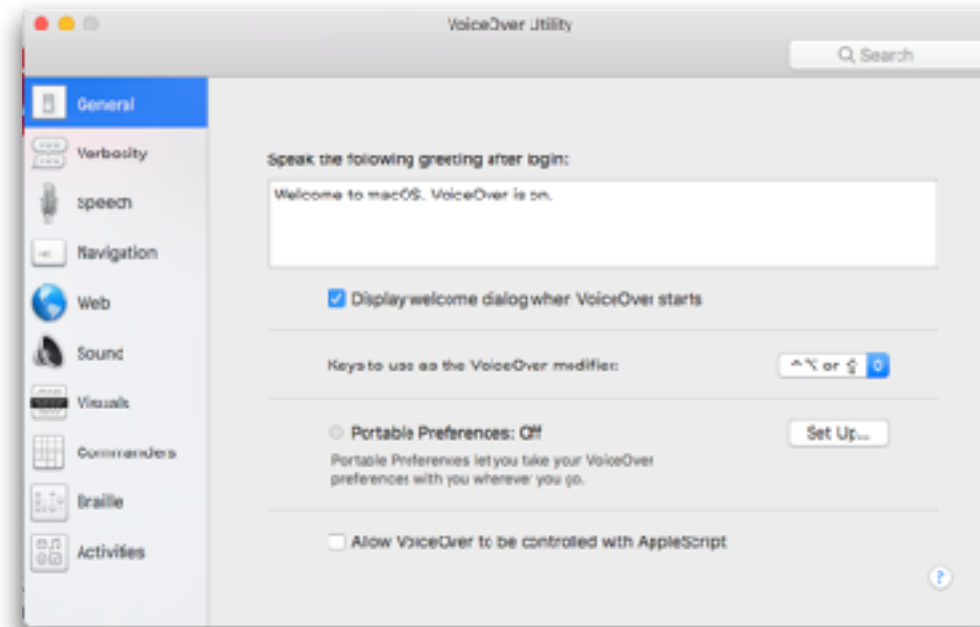
# Terminal.app

```
ward at Ward-Stakes-Intel-Computer in ~  
$ psu  
ward at Ward-Stakes-Intel-Computer in ~  
$ ls -la  
total 1412  
drwxr-xr-x  96 ward  staff  4478 Feb  3 11:51 .  
drwxr-xr-x   3 ward  staff   246 Jul 28  2014 [null].perl  
drwxr-xr-x   3 root  wheel   244 Sep 22 14:17 ..  
drwxr-xr-x   3 ward  staff   240 Dec 12 11:00 .LS40.perl  
drwxr-xr-x   3 ward  staff   240 Apr  1  2014 .40M21.perl  
drwxr-xr-x   3 ward  staff   7  Sep 25 14:00 .MUSEI10100001ng  
drwxr-xr-x  2 ward  staff  52898 Feb 11 14:00 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x  2 ward  staff  245748 Aug  5  2012 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x  2 ward  staff   0 Feb 13  2012 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x  2 ward  staff   156 Jan 14  2014 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x   3 ward  staff  777823 May 15  2012 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x  14 ward  staff   614 Feb 11 14:10 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x   3 ward  staff   0 Jan  5  2014 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x  2 ward  staff   40 Oct  3  2010 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x  2 ward  staff   142 Oct 18  2011 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x  2 ward  staff   9898 Dec 26  2014 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x  2 ward  staff   142 Dec 18 14:12 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x  2 ward  staff   298 Apr  5  2014 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x  2 root  wheel   178 Aug  3  2012 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x  2 ward  staff   72145 Jan  5 11:16 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x  2 ward  staff   73 Oct  1  2014 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x  2 ward  staff  2212 Jan 18  2015 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x   3 ward  staff   3047 Dec 20  2014 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x   3 ward  staff   2177 Dec 20  2014 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x  24 ward  staff   3010 Jan  3 11:00 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x   3 ward  staff   41 Dec 26  2014 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x  4 ward  staff   136 Jan  4  2014 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x  4 ward  staff   136 Dec 12 14:11 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x  2 root  wheel   0 Feb 15  2014 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x  2 ward  staff   264 May  9  2014 .0.0.0.0  
drwxr-xr-x  2 ward  staff   142 Sep 11  2014 .0.0.0.0
```

A command line utility for Mac. Starting with OS X 10.3, the default shell is Bash — this means that the command line experience between a fresh install of Mac and Ubuntu is nearly identical. For full control of your system, learning the command line is recommended.



# VoiceOver Utility.app



A screen reader tool for visually-impaired users.