

## **SCUM Book Review**

### **"Inside .Mac"**

**By Chuck Toporek**

**O'Reilly Media, Inc**

Reviewed by Brian Sandilands, SCUM

This book is essential reading if you are considering using Apple's .Mac (pronounced 'dot Mac') to extend the use of the various iApps available for your Macintosh computer. However, at a \$100/year for your .Mac membership, you need to make sure you will use all of the features before you spend your hard earned money. If you have already got a .Mac membership, this book will enable you to get the best use of this program as the instructions and 'help' pages are not very intuitive to say the least.

The book takes you through set up of your account and then takes you through each of the features using a separate chapter for each. The appendices have some useful keyboard short cuts, common disk error codes and how to use your iDisk for Windows XP.

I had been using .Mac for a year when I read this book and hoped it would enable me to get better value for my \$100/year than I had to date.

.Mac is designed for OS X although it can be used in OS 9. For those of you who have gone over to the Dark Side, it will explain how to use .Mac on the 'Evil Empire' machines. You will also need an Internet connection and a browser. I use Safari but others will work OK.

An advantage of a .Mac account is your email address remains constant however much you change you ISP so you do not need to keep informing friends and family of new email addresses (I moved 6 times in 6 years and it became a pain).

Although the book is about .Mac I will briefly explain what you get with a .Mac account for those who are not familiar with this program.

The book preface goes into this in detail and you get the following:

- 15 MB of email storage
- iDisc with 100 MB of storage
- Home web page
- Backup program for critical data
- McAfee Virex program for virus protection
- iSync for synchronizing addresses, bookmarks, etc
- iCards
- .Mac support

The individual chapters cover the following subjects;

- Chapter 1 Setting up your .Mac Account
- Chapter 2 Inside Mac.Com
- Chapter 3 Using your iDisk
- Chapter 4 .Mac Mail
- Chapter 5 Using Virex
- Chapter 6 Using Backup
- Chapter 7 Building a .Mac Home Page
- Chapter 8 Blogging with iBlog
- Chapter 9 Using iSync
- Chapter 10 Slide shows and iCards

Each chapter covers the subject in detail with clear instructions as to how to set up each program.

Some features that may be of interest are:

The mail program limits you to 15 MB of storage. This means you must caution your friends not to send large photo files as once the 15 MB is exceeded the mail is returned. Additional storage can be purchased but at a significant cost.

SPAM control is very good both by .Mac and by the OS X mail program.

The iDisk is like an external hard drive mounted on your desk top. It can be divided into private and public sectors and the public sector can be used to display family photos for others to view without you emailing the photos to all and sundry. However, this also is limited by its, relatively, small size of 100 MB. Again, additional storage is available if cost is not a consideration.

Virex is a state of the art virus program. It may be overkill as viruses for the Mac using OS X are very rare.

Backup allows you to back up data to your CD/DVD drive or an external drive.

If you want a Home Page .Mac will show you how.

### *Summary*

After using .Mac for a year I do not plan to renew my subscription as I do not need or use most of the features. I use mail and Virex but do not think \$100/year is worth it to me.

I find iDisc is too small for back up and have purchased a stand alone 120 GB hard drive that uses Retrospect for backing up my data.

And now I have settled down and do not plan to move again (ever!) the continuity of email address is not so important.

I have no use or need for a home page, blogging, or iSync.

This is not to detract from the book which is well written and easy to follow. If .Mac is for you, you should buy this book.