# AplePickers
## MACINTOSH USER GROUP

# June
## *Favorite Websites. Share your favorite sites and see what others have found.*

## Upcoming Meetings

**June Wednesday 4th**

**Business Meetings are now Virtual (See Forums)**

**Main Meeting
Wednesday, June 4th**

## Quick Find Index

## ApplePickers Main Meeting

We usually meet the second Wednesday of each month, 6:30-7:00 p.m. social time, main meeting 7:00-8:45 p.m. at the Fishers Library, 5 Municipal Dr. just north of 116th St. in Fishers. Visitors are always welcome to come and join us. Please check our website calendar for meeting dates.
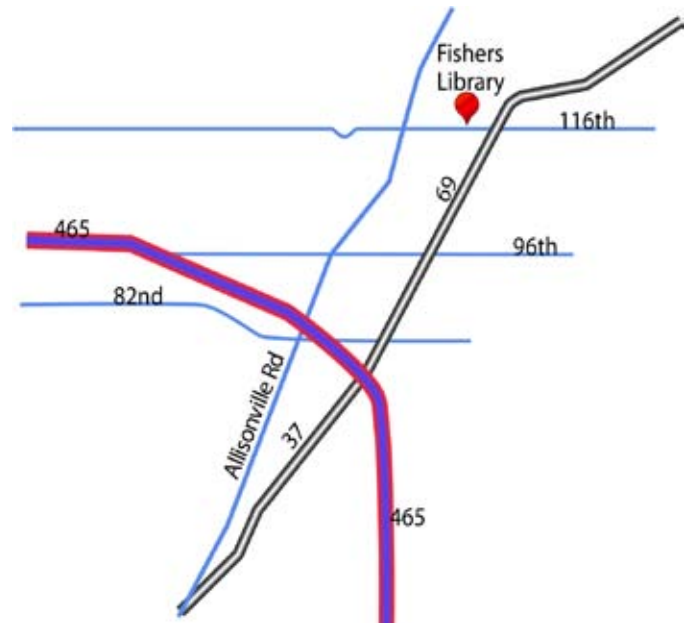
## ApplePickers Business Meeting

The business meeting is held via the ApplePickers "Virtual Business Meeting" forum topic. Any member is welcome to post in that topic stating their opinions on what the club should be doing.

## Mac ProSIG

Each month, Apple Representative Greg Willmore hosts the Mac Programmer's SIG. You should email Greg at willmore@apple.com for specific information. Location varies.

## Final Cut Pro User Group

The INDYFCPUG meets the fourth Thursday of each month from 7:00-9:30 p.m. Since the location may vary, please be sure to check their website.

## AplePickers Officers

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|---|---|---|
| President | Bob van Lier | president@applepickers.org |
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## Newsletter Production

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Editor this month | Bob van Lier | bobv@applepickers.org |
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| The Review Guru | Irv Haas | irv@applepickers.org |

## About the AplePickers

AplePickers is a not-for-profit educational organization. We are made up of volunteers who donate their time for the community advancement of computing. We are in the business of giving away information. All are welcome to join and we encourage you to get involved. Contact anyone mentioned above or write to: AplePickers, P.O.Box 20136, Indianapolis, IN., 46220

Remember that AplePickers is here to help you. This help comes from our many members who give of their time and talents to the group. Please help us to help you by giving something in return.

Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and may not be construed as the official views of the AplePickers MUG.

## Newsletter Information

We welcome members' contributions to the newsletter. Submission deadline is the 20th of the month. Please send articles to the editor for that month. Randy is the editor next month. AplePickers accepts a member's classified ad free of charge once every 6 months. Business ads are also accepted. Email pr@applepickers.org for more information, or visit our website: www.applepickers.org

Advertisement rates are as follows:
Business card size - 3" x 2.5" $60 per 6 months
Quarter page size - 3.75" x 5" $100 per 6 months

All advertisement requests must be approved by the board prior to inclusion in the newsletter. Full color or grayscale ads have the same price. We request that your ad be "camera ready" art. 300dpi is preferred. Email ads to either newsletter editor.

## AplePickers Message Boards

Come and join us at the AplePickers' new Message Boards! Ask questions, read other AplePickers member's postings. See gossip and news and special announcements. The AplePickers Message Boards are a valuable and useful member benefit! Free subscriptions for AplePickers members. To join point your browser of choice to www.applepickers.org, and click on the Forum tab on the top of the website. If you need an account or lost your password, please E-mail Bob van Lier at bobv@applepickers.org.

## Club Benefit

As a benefit to our members, we offer the ability to have your own @applepickers.org e-mail address. If you are interested in setting up an AplePickers email address for yourself, please send an e-mail request to Bob van Lier and give us the address you wish to have and whether you just want a forwarding account or a regular e-mail account.

# Alternative Mac Keyboards

*By Jack Countryman*

Two of the most used parts of the computer are two of those you hear/see the least about. These are the keyboard and mouse. While they are the parts that most of us use/touch/interact with the most, there is very little discussion about them in the Mac press or on standard sources online. While others may have just adjusted to what they are given with their current machine, or in a few cases have kept the keyboard/mouse from a previous machine (presuming both were USB models), I hear/see no discussion about anything beyond that. Certainly no reviews, comparisons, etc. between models or brands for the newer iMacs or Mac Pro models. There was some discussion years back about the Apple Extended versus other models of keyboards that seemed to conclude that most folks who participated in the discussions preferred the Apple Extended or Extended II.

## Memories

In that sense, I guess I'm the outsider. I put up with whatever comes with the machine for a while in some cases, but just as often use what went with the old machine or if pushed will go looking for something different/better, especially when I find that they are getting in my way, or limiting what I get done. Guess I'm not really into the '*joy of typing*'. I'd used the keyboard from the g3 blue & white and g4 model Macs for a lot of years, while wishing I still could use my old Apple Extended Keyboard II that I had with the Performa 575 though 8600 to work well again. Yeah, there are adapters from USB to ADB. I've got a half dozen or so of them here somewhere that I used when I went from the 8600 to the blue & white to g4 models, but there always seemed to be a lag between what I was typing and what was showing up on the screen, and some errors that they seemed to cause especially for non-alphabet keys. So, I eventually picked the least bad of the native USB Apple keyboards to use. I ended up standardizing on the white Apple "Pro" model keyboards and

used those on all the half dozen or so Macs I had set up at any given time…even the MacBookPro. Sadly, those keyboards are starting to die or not behave consistently, and do not seem to be very repairable.

Yes, the newer Macs I've got mostly came with new keyboards. But this last generation of machines all had the thin, lightweight 'chicklet' style keyboards that have very limited key stroke distance and seemingly less than standard spacing between keys. I seem to 'pound' on a keyboard too much to use those new keyboards effectively. If I try to use one of those recent keyboards, I get lots and lots of repeat key errors that force me to really slow down, or spend lots of time correcting what I thought I was typing. Back to the surviving 'Pro' keyboards. I blame the habit of 'pounding' on keyboards somewhat to the semester of typing I had in high school, and the teacher there who made sure we rotated around on the different typewriters in the room including the dreaded Underwood office manual machines. They had a measured keystroke of over 2 ½ inches, which everyone tried their best to avoid using. On the other hand, when I was asked some time back which of my high school classes had the most 'usability' or impact on my current daily life, I had to conclude that semester of personal typing would be the one…as I spend a lot of my day at the keyboard…and spent even more of it there before I retired.

## Some Alternatives

Lately I was using someone else's computer and found I really liked the keyboard. That was a strange experience for me as I typically end up 'fighting' with any strange keyboard, including those on my own laptops where the problem often is as much that the keys are closer together than any other difference. A quick look at the keyboard on that computer revealed it was not even an Apple, Dell, Compaq or other major brand keyboard. It turned out to be one of the old translucent MacAlly models that still

had the mechanical keyswitches in it.  For you computer youngsters, keyboards used to be made in the ancient days with mechanical switches in each key.  Those can often be picked out as they have a particular 'feel' to the keys, and often a recognizable clicking sound and more depth or length to the keystroke than the current generation of Apple keyboards.  Those of us who got used to such things, get frustrated easily on the latest Apple (Chicklet) keyboards which limit keystroke to about ¹⁄₁₆ of an inch or less since the keyswitches are made with some sort of plastic film instead of a real metal switch on each key.

### Matias Keyboards

When I got home, I started doing a bit of investigating about what keyboards are actually still available for Macs.  Yeah, I know, in theory, any keyboard for a modern USB PC could also be used on a Mac, but there are specialized keys on both Mac and PC keyboards that often do not translate well to the other variety of computer.  A good example is the less expensive Matias keyboards sold for Mac which though they are mechanical, are supposedly made with both USB 2 and USB 3 capability, and as a result with two USB cables to attach to the computer.  Somehow, trying to use command key combinations, or other multiple key combinations often doesn't work.  Nor does caps lock…which typically works differently on a PC keyboard than it does on a Mac.  The much vaunted USB 3 dock on those cheaper Matias keyboards doesn't seem to work on a Mac at all… even on my Mac Pro 5,1 which has a USB 3 pci card in it that I plug the separate USB 3 keyboard cable into. I have no idea why it doesn't work, but presume it perhaps needs a driver, and no such driver comes with either the keyboard or the pci card. The 'standard' USB 2 ports on those keyboards also do not work reliably to daisy chain the mouse.   A recent series of emails with tech support at Matias reveals
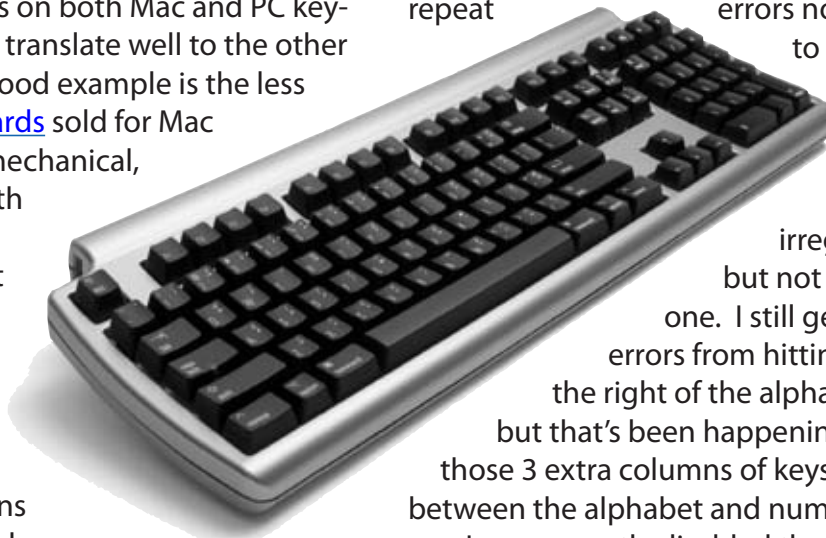
their insistence that no driver is needed for any of their Mac keyboards because they are all 'ANSI compliant'.  They had me delete plists, and even parts of the system software with no benefit.  I found a cd of Matias drivers for "old versions of OSX" on eBay, which seems to help some with the Tactile Pro and Quiet Pro models but not at all with those cheaper models.

I was starting to get standardized on the Matias Tactile Pro models of keyboards.  Some of the MacAlly keyboards I've come across, including one from the days when USB was just coming out and they still were mechanical keyswitches, are a close second, but I could not reliably find them for sale, except for the occasional used one on eBay, and those were often in poor condition.  The Matias keyboards are readily available online. The Matias Tactile Pro have the feel/depth of stroke to the keys that feels much better to me.  I very seldom if ever have key repeat errors now and do not have to limit my uneven typing speed even though I don't consider myself a fast typist…an irregular one, maybe… but not a consistently fast one.  I still get a few occasional errors from hitting extraneous keys to the right of the alphabet keys at times… but that's been happening ever since they put those 3 extra columns of keys on the keyboards between the alphabet and number pad keys.  Years ago I permanently disabled the six keys in the top group there on many keyboards, but have not bothered recently. I do not know if its possible to do that easily anymore.

Just today, I received one of the Matias 'Quiet Pro' models that looks to have the same layout/function as the Tactile Pro, but which is not nearly as noisy as the Tactile Pro.  The keys feel somewhat less stiff, and seem to have a bit shorter key travel, but are nearly silent.  We'll see how it does over the long run. This model, unfortunately, only comes with black keys, and I've gotten used to/prefer white keyboards that are easier for my aging vision.  Somehow it's a lot

easier for me to glance from a screen to white keys and see quickly what I need than it is to look down at black keys where my eyes seem to take longer to adapt/focus so I can see what I need. As such, the black keys seem to force pauses in the typing that the white keyboards don't. Who knows if I can adapt to it or whether I'll go back to the Tactile Pro again, or maybe even find something I like better? Ideas/recommendations welcome.

### Concluding Thoughts…

But in short, THERE ARE ALTERNATIVES to the stock keyboards Apple, Dell, Lenovo, or whoever else gives you with your new machine. If the new one bugs you, I strongly suggest you take some time to experiment with the old one (you do still have the old machine there till you get the new one de-bugged and working right, don't you? Or did the old one totally fail in rebellion against your lack of maintenance?), or perhaps others that can be found on the after market. The best tactic may be to try whatever different keyboards you run into on public use computers, ones set up for demo in computer stores, etc. till you find one you really like. Is buying a separate keyboard an added expense? Yes, it is. But if ease of use, speed, accuracy, and lack of frustration count for anything, its perhaps worth it. I seem to spend a lot less time correcting typing errors on the Matias Tactile Pro and Quiet Pro models than I was doing on the aging versions of the older Apple keyboards, and the newer Apple keyboards were just unusable for me. So the time saved and lack of frustration do count for something to me. I think I'm going to like the Quiet Pro better than the Tactile Pro, though this Quiet Pro seems to want me to push the very inside part of the left shift key to get a capital letter for some reason. Maybe it will 'break in' and do better? Or maybe I'll even learn to do it the way the keyboard wants? As an added bonus, I can even get a Matias Quiet Pro for the Windows machine I have across the room…which should be more nearly the same as the Quiet Pro keyboards on the Macs here than the pc centric keyboards I've had on that Windows machine have been in the past? Its not that I use the Windows machine that much, but its still always a bit of a hassle to have to slow down and watch my keyboarding there. This might get me around that?

Going back and forth to a laptop is another issue… but since there are usb ports on them now that allow use of the same usb keyboards as on desktops (if space is available) they are somewhat more adaptable than the older laptops. I still remember when I used the Apple ergonomic keyboards on all my desktops, and used to curse the laptop I was forced to use at work which would not allow me to use one of those ergonomic keyboards with it. Compaq just didn't have any ports for external keyboards on their small laptops in those days, especially none that worked with Apple adb external keyboards! And worse, the keyboard on that small laptop was about 1/3 smaller than a standard desktop, so the distances between the smaller keys, both horizontally and vertically, were different also. Too bad all of those Apple Ergonomic keyboards died such an early death, or I might have found a way to make them work on the newer macs and would still be using the Apple Ergonomic Keyboard or the Apple Extended Keyboard II models today. The Quiet Pro seems to be the best I've found of the currently available keyboards though, with the Tactile Pro in second place. Some of the old translucent MacAlly models might have been almost as good, but I haven't found any in good enough condition to trust for daily use.

Experiment and decide for yourself if the change is worth it for you. I've found new or nearly new Quiet Pro and Tactile Pro keyboards on eBay for as low as $60 shipped…even though the list price is about $145 plus shipping. Evidently others tried them and decided they didn't like them, or liked something else better. *Caveat Emptor.*

# Mail Improvements in OS X 10.9.2

*by Joe Kissell*

I t seems to happen like clockwork: I release a book about some Apple product or service, and within a week, Apple updates its offerings in such a way as to invalidate what I wrote. But this time I had a tiny bit of luck: Apple's 10.9.2 update (see "10.9.2 Fixes Critical SSL Security Bug, Adds FaceTime Audio," 25 February 2014) was released hours before we planned to publish my new book, "Take Control of Apple Mail," and that gave me just enough time to revisit problems in previous versions of Mail and edit the manuscript to reflect the changes.

I'm pleased to report that the new version of Mail in 10.9.2 (version 7.2, build 1874) is far better than its predecessors, about which I complained mightily in "Mail in Mavericks Changes the Gmail Equation" (22 October 2013) and (to a slightly lesser extent) "Mail in Mavericks: Is It Safe Yet?" (11 November 2013). That meant I was able to delete quite a few paragraphs from my book detailing bugs and other infelicitous changes. But, to keep this in perspective: Mail is now at the point where it should have been when Mavericks was released.

Since those paragraphs will no longer be in the book, I wanted to report what I've found. I'll begin with the usual disclaimers: not every problem has disappeared, and what works for one person doesn't necessarily work for everyone. As evidenced by the long list of comments on this article, plenty of people are still experiencing significant problems. Even so, this is the first version of Mail in Mavericks that feels reasonably reliable, and it's about time!

As always, Apple's own claims about what has changed are vague and incomplete. The relevant lines from the release notes are as follows:

➢ Includes general improvements to the stability and compatibility of Mail

➢ Improves the accuracy of unread counts in Mail

➢ Resolves an issue that prevented Mail from re-ceiving new messages from certain providers

➢ Improves VoiceOver navigation in Mail and Finder

➢ Improves compatibility with Gmail Archive mailboxes

➢ Includes improvements to Gmail labels

That all sounds encouraging, if not terribly clear. So, take Apple's list with a grain of salt. Here's what my tests have shown:

➢ Unified mailbox behavior: In 10.8 Mountain Lion and before, you could drag a message from any mailbox to the unified Inbox icon (which contains the Inboxes for all your accounts), and Mail would move it to the Inbox of the account where the message was stored — unless it was stored locally and thus not in any account, in which case it would be moved to the account shown first under the unified mailbox. The same went for other unified mailboxes — Drafts, Sent, Junk, Trash, and Archive. However, in 10.9.0 and 10.9.1, this convenience feature was gone; when dragging a message to any unified mailbox, you had to expand it and select a specific account underneath. Now, in 10.9.2, we're back to the more convenient Mountain Lion behavior.

➢ Gmail special mailboxes: In the first two releases of Mavericks, although you could uncheck the Store Draft Messages on the Server, Store Sent Messages on the Server, Store Junk Messages on the Server, or Move Deleted Messages to the Trash Mailbox checkboxes on the Mailbox Behaviors view of your Gmail account preferences, as soon as you reopened the Preferences window, you'd see that they were checked again. In other words, you were obligated to store Gmail drafts, sent, junk, and trash email on

the server whether you wanted to or not. Furthermore, Mail forced you to use the default locations for Gmail's Drafts, Sent, Junk, and Trash mailboxes. (That is, if you selected another mailbox and chose Mailbox > Use This Mailbox For, the submenu was dimmed.) Both of those annoyances are now gone; you can store special Gmail mailboxes on the server or not, and if you do, you can choose nonstandard mailboxes if you prefer.

➢ Gmail mailbox order: Previously, you could not rearrange Gmail mailboxes in Mail's sidebar; those at the top level of your Gmail account were always in alphabetical order (although, strangely, mailboxes nested within another mailbox could still be reordered). Now you can reorder Gmail mailboxes, but not the special-purpose mailboxes Gmail creates automatically, such as Important and Chats.

➢ Gmail AppleScript problems: If you had an AppleScript that targeted a Gmail mailbox other than Inbox or Archive/All Mail, it would fail, because AppleScript saw all the other Gmail mailboxes as being empty. Now AppleScripts can again see into Gmail mailboxes properly.

➢ Exchange reliability: Users with Exchange accounts had found that Mail checked for new messages on launch, but not afterwards; you had to either quit and reopen Mail or take your accounts offline and then check for new messages manually (as described in this Apple support article). That has now been fixed, at least for most users.

➢ Addressing to Smart Groups: The Contacts app lets you create groups of addresses — for example, a Family group that contains the contact records of your family members. You can type a portion of a group's name and Mail autocompletes it just as it would for an individual name. Autocomplete does not work for Smart Groups (so, that much hasn't changed since 10.9.1), but now, if you type the entire, exact name of the Smart Group and type a comma or press Tab or Return, Mail at least displays the group name in a nice blue bubble, and the Smart Group does in fact work — Mail sends the message to the correct addresses.

That's as much as my testing has revealed so far. I wouldn't be surprised to find more improvements (or new bugs, for that matter). I can't yet say whether other issues with Gmail or Exchange have been dealt with. And although Apple may have improved the accuracy of unread counts (perhaps for Smart Mailbox badges), I've read multiple reports that the badge on Mail's Dock icon still isn't accurate. Numerous other issues remain, as well, but on the whole the bugs seem to be fewer and less severe than before.

If you've noticed additional improvements, things that are still broken, or new bugs, please share them with us in the comments. And if you ever feel as though your email is out of control, my brand new 175-page book "Take Control of Apple Mail" will help you become more productive with Apple Mail in 10.9 Mavericks and iOS 7, providing essential advice for Gmail, iCloud, IMAP, and Exchange accounts. It reveals hidden interface elements, shows how to customize Mail, explains my strategy for avoiding email overload, demystifies encrypted email, and provides solutions to common problems, among many other things.

# 2014 MacBook Air Offers Better Performance for $100 Less

*by Josh Centers*

While the just-released new models of the MacBook Air don't boast changes along the lines of dramatic battery life improvements of last year's models (see "Apple Releases Longer-lasting MacBook Air, Faster AirPort," 10 June 2013), or much-desired Retina displays, they do feature small performance improvements and a $100 price drop across the board.

Both the 11- and 13-inch models have replaced last year's 1.3 GHz Intel Core i5 processor with a 1.4 GHz Intel Core i5 (which jumps to 2.7 GHz via Turbo Boost). As far as we can tell, that's the only functional change.

Interestingly, Apple now rates the 11-inch MacBook Air as being capable of up to 9 hours of iTunes movie playback (up from 8), and the 13-inch model as having up to 12 hours (from 10). Those numbers are higher than in last year's models despite the battery technology remaining the same; the change is likely due to how Mavericks offloads more video process-ing to the graphics processing unit (see "Apple Previews OS X 10.9 Mavericks," 10 June 2013)

Optional improvements remain the same as before, so the MacBook Air models can be configured with more storage (512 GB for $300 — available only for 256 GB base models), a faster 1.7 GHz dual-core Intel Core i7 processor (for $150, and Turbo Boost can kick it up to 3.3 GHz), and 4 GB more RAM to bring the total to 8 GB (for $100). Also remaining the same as last year's models are the form factor, connectors, and Intel HD Graphics 5000 graphics processors.

But prices have dropped by $100, so the 11-inch MacBook Air now starts at $899 for 128 GB of flash storage and $1,099 for 256 GB of storage, while the 13-inch MacBook Air starts at $999 for 128 GB and goes to $1,199 for 256 GB.

# White House Report Recommends Requiring Warrants for Email

*by Geoff Duncan*

In the wake of mass surveillance revelations sparked by Edward Snowden and others, back in January President Obama ordered his Council of Advisors on Science and Technology to conduct a 90-day review of policies surrounding so-called "big data" and privacy. The council has been looking into everything from marketing analytics (those ads that seem to follow psychically you around the Internet), national security, and biometrics (face and speech recognition) to encryption, data mining, health care, education, automated sensors, and the "Internet of things."

The council issued its report last week, and privacy advocates have lauded one of the recommendations: reform of the 1986 Electronic Communications Privacy Act (ECPA) to "ensure the standard of protection for online, digital content is consistent with that afforded in the physical world."

Why is that important? Among other things, ECPA enables law enforcement agencies to access email if it's left unread or kept online for more than six months with just a subpoena, which needs nothing more than a signature by a government agent. Conversely, search warrants require probable cause and approval by a judge. Subpoenas are a lot easier to get than warrants.

Take a moment to consider email you may have online in Gmail, iCloud, Hotmail, Facebook, your ISP, or any number of other places that's more than six months old. Now consider that in the last six months of 2013, Google says it received more than 7,700 warrantless requests for user data covering more than 13,500 accounts. Facebook says it got about 5,400 such requests in the same period. Both companies turned over data in the vast majority of the cases.

Clearly, law enforcement agencies are making use of their ability to subpoena email and other communications without a warrant.

How We Got Here -- Nearly three decades ago, ECPA's six-month window on accessing email without a warrant wasn't entirely unreasonable. Ronald Reagan was president, there was no public Internet, and there were no ISPs. Heck, in 1986, my entire online storage on ARPANET (what would eventually become today's Internet) was limited to a mere 512 KB (yes, kilobytes!), and I was way ahead of the curve. Considering email messages "abandoned" after 180 days was a generous definition at the time. After all, email was the province of big business and academia, and most users quickly deleted, downloaded, or (ack!) printed messages because they didn't have space to store them.

When Congress enacted ECPA, lawmakers envisioned that if the government wanted old email they would almost certainly need a search warrant for specific locations or devices — in 1986, "devices" meant "computers." Few could imagine everyday Internet users would routinely accumulate gigabytes' and years' worth of email online.

The technology industry has been urging ECPA reform for years — a recent example is Digital Due Process, a coalition supported by everybody from Twitter and Apple to Intel and AOL (which, ironically, may hold some of the oldest consumer email on the planet). The essential thrust of the argument is that users' digital content — whether on their personal devices or stored on Internet-based services — should be subject to the same legal protections as a person's property. That means the government would need a search warrant before it could requires online data of any age.

Nonetheless, Congress has stalled ECPA reform for years. And, believe it or not, some are against reforming the statute. For instance, while criminal law enforcement agencies like the FBI might be able to obtain search warrants fairly easily, civil law enforcement agencies might have more trouble. The best example is the Securities and Exchange

Commission (SEC) (which is primarily a law enforcement agency, in fact), but other examples could include the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and even the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Reforming ECPA could hinder these agencies' ability to go after wrongdoers.

What Happens Now? -- The publication of the White House report on big data carries no legislative weight: it's just a document, and Congress is under no obligation to act upon it or even read it. (There is some small irony that the presidential counsel who headed up the paper — John Podesta — co-authored ECPA back in the day.) However, by adding its voice to the chorus calling for ECPA reform, the White House is at a minimum making a populist move in favor of online privacy that consumers (and voters) can easily understand. As the ramifications of the NSA mass surveillance continue to unfold, that may be smart politics.

Unfortunately, the likelihood that Congress will enact ECPA reform in the near future are slim to none.

The Senate and House are now deadlocked on party lines on most major issues, and Congress has just entered a holding pattern in anticipation of mid-term elections.

In theory, President Obama could issue an executive order mandating search warrants for disclosure of email and other electronic data. In some ways, it's a safe bet: only two executive orders have ever been overturned in the history of the U.S. presidency. However, unlike laws, executive orders can be undone at any time by the president, and who knows how the next administration will feel about ECPA?

For now, email, text messages, and other communications older than six months can be requested from Internet companies by law enforcement agencies at any time — and that's likely to remain the law of the land indefinitely.

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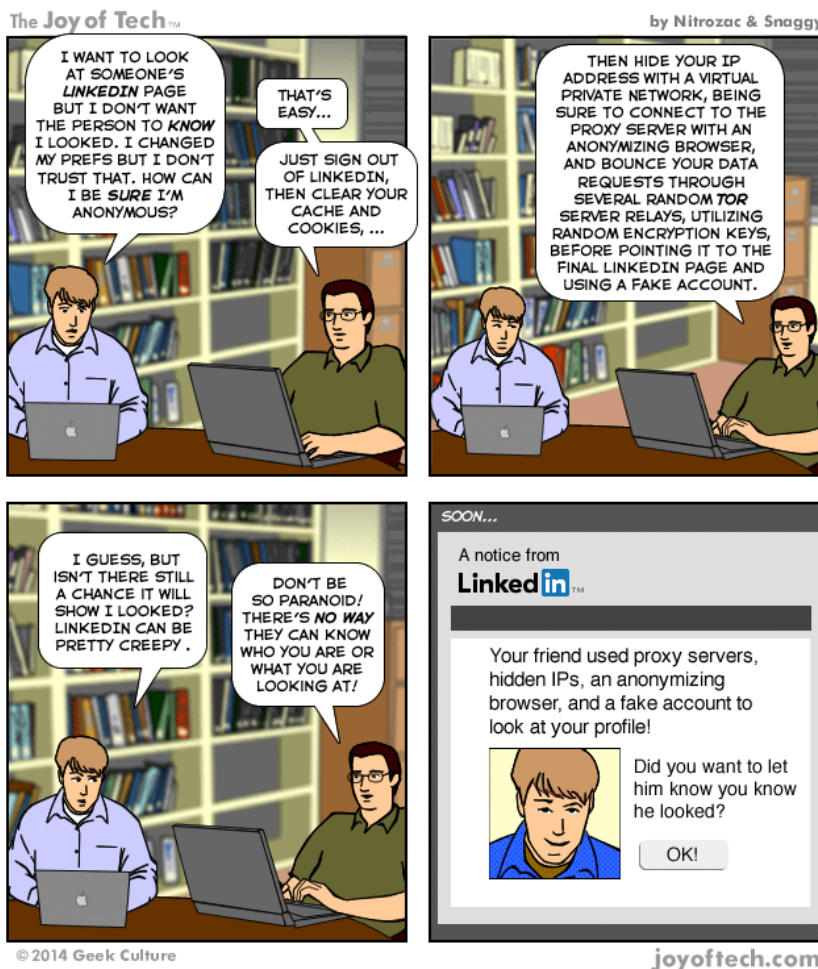
# Speed up Mac Pro... Perhaps Laptops... with an SSD Drive

*By Jack Countryman*

One of the recent techno gadgets to hit the market are SSDs or Solid State Drives.  Basically these are larger/more dense arrays of memory chips similar to those that have been used for RAM in computers, but made to retain content even when the computer's power is off. The advantage over standard hard drives is that these are much faster, and since they do not have motors or bearings, they have no moving parts to fail. Lots of claims are made about the speed, but I found little that documents speed in a computer. So, when I saw one on sale at a computer store last summer, with a rebate in addition, I decided to try it and see if I could tell the difference for myself.

Then comes the complications. The SSDs available are all 2.5 inch drives. 2.5 drives are typically used in laptops, especially the MacBook Air, etc. I usually run a Mac Pro, which uses 3.5 drives. So, some adaptation would be needed. At least the drives are all SATA (earlier types of drives, sasi, scsi, ice, even ata are not typically used in newer machines).  Looking at where the drive would need to mount to mate with the built-in connectors in the computer didn't reveal any easy way to mount the SSD to the drive tray in the MacPro so the connectors would match up. The first solution to this difficulty was to get a SATA power/data cable, that would plug into the connector in the computer, and also into the the one on the drive. I scrounged around and found cables to make the connections, then I laid the drive on the plastic tray where cards would ordinarily mount in the computer, fired things up, formatted/partitioned the drive, and was soon in business. Though I was a bit concerned about the drive not being secured in place, it worked fine.

To take advantage of the speed for the things that occur most often, I moved the boot system to the SSD, and watched to see how often I noticed the spinning beach ball or other signs that the system was having to wait. I soon found that these only showed up when the machine needed to access data or other files stored on the traditional drives. I could minimize that some, by setting those drives not to sleep so they were always available. So, this was a real advantage compared to the many spinning beach balls I'd seen in the past.

After some shopping, I found that some of the SSD drives were starting to show up in the stores with a ready made plate to span normal 3.5 drive mount points. I got one in hopes that it would mount across the MacPro drive tray and put the SSD where it would mate with the built-in connector in the computer. No joy! The connector is off to the side too far to let this work, or else the sides of the drive tray are too wide. I decided not to start modifying the drive tray. Instead I mounted the drive facing away from the built-in connector, and used the power/data cables to hook it up. This had all the advantages of the previous setup, and in addition, secured the drive more rigidly in place so it didn't move around, especially if the computer got bumped or jostled. It looked a bit messy, but nobody was looking at the inside of the case but me, and even I didn't see it with the case closed up.

On a later visit to the computer store, I found a PCIe card that would mount a 2.5 drive, and then the card would go into one of the PCIe slots on the MacPro making all needed connections (power and data) through the PCIe slot connections. This eliminates all the jury-rigging, extra cables, etc., though it does use a PCIe slot. It works fine, so much so that I went looking for another to use in a different machine, only to find that the store had re-arranged its stuff, eliminating the display where I found the card, and seemingly no longer sold that device (or at least none of the folks in the store recognized the device I described). I had pitched the blister pack it came in, so I have not been able to trace the manufacturer and find another. The numbers on the device do not show in any of the web sites that claim to identify

Name_____
Additional Family Members

_____
Address _____
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computer devices from FCC#...so either the numbers on it are not FCC identification # or its never been entered into that database.

Then I saw an ad for a bracket made by MaxUpgrades that was intended to mount a 2.5 drive into one of the Mac Pro hard drive bays and align the drive to use the internal hard drive connector. So I ordered one. Its essentially a machined aluminum plate designed to fit to the drive mounting bracket slot in the MacPro, with mounting holes where they need to be to mount the 2.5 drive, and worked just as advertised, holding the 2.5 SSD off-center to the side of the bracket, and letting the connector on the drive mate with the built-in connector in the computer.

This works as well as the bracket for the pci-e slot, with the advantage that it puts the drive where its intended to mount in the computer and where it perhaps gets better airflow to keep it cool. Functionally I do not see any difference in speed between them, so which you use is up to you, or becomes a function of which you can find, though MaxUpgrades.com is easy to find on the web, while I still haven't found any source for the other card.

So…bottom line, you can speed up the MacPro a bit, and eliminate most if not all of the wait state/spinning beach ball behavior, though it does take poking around some inside the machine and spending some money to replace components that came in the machine with newer and in some cases faster, alternatives. Sorry, but none of this applies directly to iMacs or laptops....though perhaps an SSD could be used to speed up those machines also. SSD drives should fit right in replacing the 2.5 drives in modern laptops... though getting to the drives in those machines is often painful.

No guarantee or warranty of your ability to make such modifications on any of your Macs is expressed or implied. Caveat Emptor.