

Technology - MacCentral

Apple Posts iMac SuperDrive Update for OS 9

by Peter Cohen

Following Mac OS X -based firmware updates for its SuperDrive-equipped 15-inch flat-panel iMacs and some Power Mac G4s, Apple has posted a link to a new iMac SuperDrive Update for Mac OS 9 to its SuperDrive Update Web page.

Although Mac OS X ships pre-installed on SuperDrive-equipped iMacs, some users prefer to use Mac OS 9 for application support or workflow reasons. As a result, Apple has posted this new firmware update, designed to support those users who choose not to use Mac OS X.

"SuperDrive" is Apple's nomenclature for DVD-R optical drive mechanisms. The drive can burn DVD-R disks in addition to CD-R media. The SuperDrive Update corrects a problem first identified by the mechanism's manufacturer, Pioneer, which noted that some of its DVD-R optical drive mechanisms could, under certain circumstance, stop working correctly all together when they are used with new "high-speed" 4x DVD-R and 2x DVD-RW media.

The problem only affects certain Macs equipped with SuperDrives.

Apple's update also enables users to eject audio CDs that are copy-protected or have mastering errors. This change hopefully resolves an issue first noted earlier this year when some publishers began to ship music discs that prevented Macs and PCs from reading them, in the hope it would curb piracy. Apple noted at the time that under certain circumstances, those discs could get jammed in certain Mac models and might require a technician to disassemble the drive to remove.

This specific update is only required for iMac models with 15-inch flat panel displays equipped with an internal SuperDrive, running Mac OS 9. The 1.5MB file is available for download from Apple's Web site. If you're using that system with Mac OS X and have not yet applied the firmware update, visit the SuperDrive Update Web page for a link to the OS X version.

In related news, Apple indicates that a Power Mac G4 SuperDrive Update for Mac OS 9 "will be posted shortly." Users are encouraged to revisit the SuperDrive Update Web page for further details.



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Backup Basics

by Ric Getter

It started out as one of those odd little crashes. A completely empty dialog box appears and then everything freezes. Okay. It happens. The keyboard is frozen as well, so I reach down and cycle the power button on the CPU. The friendly thrum of the startup chime comes from the speakers and a few moments later, the flashing question mark of the mystery disk icon appears at the center of the empty, gray screen. Another restart yields the same result. I am getting nervous now. I finally restart using my OS install CD. But when the Desktop loads and the dreaded "This disk is unreadable..." message pops up instead of my hard drive icon, I know I'm in trouble.

Like a lot of people, I really never thought it would happen to me. I get paid to help other people keep their Macs running and always felt that I had a very healthy system. And yes, I did do backups. But over the course of the next twelve hours of diagnosing, salvaging and reinstalling, I realized that I didn't do them well enough.

The most important issue to think about is not so much what the chances are of your drive failing, but how much work you're willing to do when it does. The trick to that is getting your recovery priorities in line.

A Matter of Priorities

Your top priority, of course, is preserving your original documents that don't exist in any other form. (It would be a pain, but as long as you have a printed copy of your Great American Novel, all is not lost.). But don't make the mistake of limiting your thinking to documents that represent your final product. You may have put a lot of work in creating documents templates, macros, address lists and calendars. And don't forget those fourteen megabytes of e-mail you've been meaning to sort through and clean up. How many times have you had to search through a pile of old messages looking for a certain e-mail address or software registration code? Also, if those browser bookmarks are really important to you, you will want to be sure that they are safe and sound

somewhere.

I now keep all my documents in (of all places) the Documents folder. It contains a fairly hairy hierarchy of subfolders, but everything is in just about the same place. This, by the way, makes Sherlock's indexing a lot easier. Since OS 9.0.4, you can use Contextual Menus (holding down the Control key and clicking) to index only a folder.

Once these files are safely tucked away somewhere off your primary hard drive, recovery then becomes an issue of relative difficulty, rather than relative disaster. In other words, how much time are you willing to spend recovering the rest of your system? Priorities come in to play here as well. Assuming you have all your original application installers and system discs, you can pretty-much rebuild the rest of your drive from scratch. Are there certain "mission critical" applications and capabilities that you will need to get back immediately (i.e. e-mail, web browser, word processor, etc.)? For these, you may want to be in a position where they can be restored from a backup rather than reinstalled. Some programs keep all their user files in one folder, so it is not that hard to reinstall if you have your user file easily backed up.

Obviously, the hardest part of your system to recover is the System Folder, itself. If you're like most Mac users, you've taken full advantage of the OS's flexibility and numerous third-party extensions to create a system that is customized for the way that you work. With the cost of hard disk space dropping as far as it has (especially for the ATA drives Macs now use), it is worth keeping a copy of your system file on its own partition, or preferably on its own drive. The former will protect you from a file-system problem (like the one that hosed my system). The latter will help when you have a hardware problem. This brings up another question you need to ask yourself. What kind of disaster do you want to prepare yourself for?

Hardware bs. Software

These days, the worst kind of failure-a hard-drive

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hardware problem-has become one of the least likely possibilities. Most drives are built well and you will probably outgrow yours before it nears the end of its useful life. But when the hardware goes bad, you will loose the whole drive and having multiple partitions won't bail you out. There are some data-recovery companies out there, but they don't work cheap. You may need to cash in some of your stock options to go that route.

The cheapest way to assure a fast and relatively painless recovery from a fried drive is to keep a complete and up to date copy of it on a second drive. As long as you don't need to keep your backup off-site (hard drives are a little harder to lug around than streaming tape cassettes), you can use a file synchronization utility like Copy Agent. These programs are smart enough to copy only the files that have changed. (If you discover that your synchronization program keeps copying your application files, you better run a virus scan--quick.)

A "real" backup program like Retrospect takes a little more effort to set up, but it makes creating backups of a number of data folders than making manual copies with our without a synchronization program a lot easier. Retrospect Express is the lightweight (read "cheap") version of the program for single-user systems. The current release inherited one of the most useful features of its big brother, creating a backup that exists as a single file, rather than needing to take over a full volume. This means that if you're using a second hard drive for backups, it can be used for other kinds of storage, as well.

Convience is Critical

If backups are too much trouble to keep current, they are not going to offer much security, are they? I've been using both of these programs to maintain a backup strategy that is both secure and convenient. The way I am set up, it is either a drag-and-drop process or I start a script running and walk away.

My system uses two hard drives, one internal and one external. My primary drive has two partitions,

each with a full system file. Any time I make a change to the System (installing or updating virtually anything into the System Folder), I will make a fresh copy of the folder before the install. When I am certain that everything is working well and stable, I'll copy the updated System folder to both the second partition and the external drive. Even though my System is a little large (some may call it a total zoo), CopyAgent takes care of the update in well under a minute.

I use the external drive for my Retrospect Express backups. I mostly do "incremental" backups, but every couple of months I will start fresh with a full backup. The external drive also houses my mirror backup of the primary drive, but I only usually synchronize the two after I've added or updated major applications. And yes, it also contains a copy of my System Folder.

For me, Retrospect was not the easiest program to get the hang of. Fortunately, it didn't create a major problem, but I once discovered that I wasn't backing up everything that I thought I was. Now, anytime I make a change to the Retrospect "script" that controls my backup, I will test recovering a file or two to make sure everything is working the way I want it to.

On a Deeper Level

I'm not really an expert on file recovery, but I believe that the cause of the crash I experienced was a corrupted master directory block, a relatively small bit of data that holds the key to where all your files are on your drive. Even though I've never had the opportunity (or the desire) to test it, I now use Tech Tool Pro's Protection Control Panel to automatically backup my directory data each time I shut down. It's quick and painless and that alone may have saved me all the grief of rebuilding my hard drive.

I imagine that it's possible to spend your entire career contently computing without a single, major hard drive disaster. It is simply something I never intend to count on. But, with some simple backup procedures in place, I imagine that it will be much

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Apple expands AppleCare protection program

by Jim Dalrymple

Apple on Monday (November 18, 2002) unveiled a new version of the company's service and support agreement that can be purchased with a new Macintosh. The plan features several enhancements for the mobile and desktop user alike.

Users of Apple's PowerBook G4 or iBook will be glad to hear that the AppleCare Protection Plan now includes global repair for portable computers. Apple has also added coverage in the new plan for Apple displays purchased with a G4 PowerBook.

Onsite service for Apple's desktop line of Power Mac G4s has also been added to the AppleCare Protection Plan.

The AppleCare program extends the warranty on your computer from 90-days of complimentary support and one-year warranty to up to three years of support.

More information on the AppleCare Protection Plan, including pricing, is available from Apple's online store.

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less of a problem than it could be.

About the Author

Ric Getter is currently working full time as a content writer for the NetSchools.com education portal site. In addition, he has been a regular contributor to both the print and online versions of for the MacDirectory past year.

He has been a near-fanatical Mac user since February of 1984 and worked intimately with some very impersonal, room-sized computers for a few years before that.

RICK'S TIPS 'N TRICKS

By: Rick Calicura

DVMUG President Emeritus

Mac OS X 10.2.2 has been released. Apple continues to refine this wonderful operating system. There are many, many improvements. If you have broadband and use Jaguar, you really should take advantage of the Software Update function in your System Preferences. If you have a modem, well, you may need to make an appointment at the MacClinic so you can borrow the club's broadband connection to download these massive files—they are entirely worth the trouble.

One of the best features incorporated in the new version of Jaguar is the ability to do a "clean" install. It actually installs a brand-new System and moves the old one to a folder entitled Previous Systems. One of the coolest features of the clean install is that you can have the installer copy all of your Internet settings over to the new system.

Handy Keyboard Shortcuts In Jaguar

Apple continues to emphasize the importance of the Command, Option and, more recently, Control keys. These keys, in association with other keys, help to make your life much easier when you are working on your Mac. I thought I would include some of Bob Levitus' favorites here:

In the Dock

Command-click - Show in Finder.

Option-click - Hide current app and switch to clicked app.

Option-press - Option-click-and-hold to change "Quit" menu item to "ForceQuit."

Command-Option-click - Hides all other apps and switches to clicked app.

In the Finder

Command-Option-drag - Creates an alias.

RICK'S ROUNDUP

By: Rick Calicura

DVMUG President Emeritus

New Card Reader Needed

While Jaguar is a superb operating system, a lot of providers have had to rewrite their software or change the ROMS in their devices. My flash card reader stopped working in Jaguar and the manufacturer was unable to provide me with a date when a Jaguar-compatible version would be issued. DVMUG Vice President Vern Laursen told me that Kingston makes a flash-card reader that is compatible with Jaguar. It was what I needed, but I was taken aback by the rather steep price of over \$50. I decided to think it over.

Then Asanté brought out a nifty little card reader that reads every type of photo-storage device including IBM's miniature hard drives. The device is called the Gini (6 in 1) card reader; it's small and complete in one package. Mine cost \$39 from Amazon.com (log on through our DVMUG web page so DVMUG gets a small commission) AND Amazon offers a \$10 rebate.

The beauty of this little device is that it is totally "plug and play" with Jaguar, though it requires installation of software from the included CD to work with earlier Mac operating systems. It will work under most any flavor of Windows as well. With this device, not only can you copy photos from the computer to a memory device, you can copy BETWEEN memory devices. So, let's imagine that

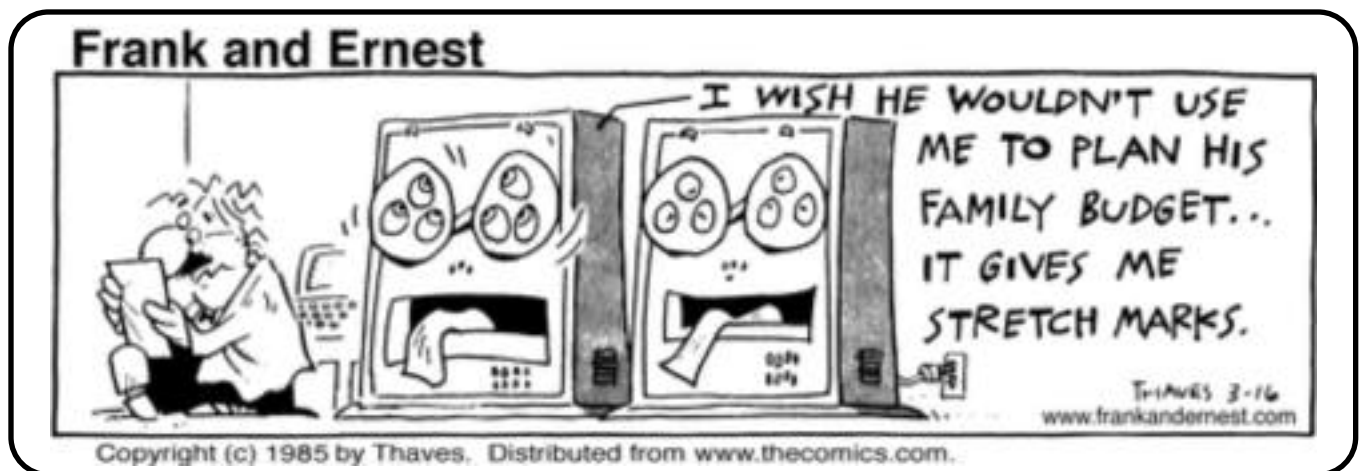
Cousin Joe, who has a Sony camera using memory sticks, took some wedding pictures of a family member when he was visiting Lower Slobovia and you want to have the full copies of those photos. With Gini, you can take his memory stick, insert it, insert your memory device, and actually copy the pictures from his to yours. Wonderful!

Password Problem

Some of you may have seen my post in the Gateway of DVMUG where I asked for help in eliminating the necessity of providing my password every time I opened my e-mail program in my Titanium PowerBook. What was especially frustrating was that the settings in my PowerBook were identical with those in my G4, but the G4 did not require a password. I tried every remedy that I could and that pesky PowerBook just would not give it up.

A short while ago, Apple released a new little utility called Keychain First Aid. I downloaded it and ran it...PROBLEM SOLVED! This took less than 3 minutes and I had been battling this problem for weeks. Keychain First Aid is certainly worth downloading. You may download Keychain First Aid from www.versiontracker.com or www.macupdates.com.

Life is good!
Merry Christmas!



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Command-drag (to another volume) - Moves item instead of copying it.

Option-drag (to another folder or the Desktop) - Copies the item.

Command-drag a menu bar icon (volume, displays, etc.) - Moves the icon.

Command-drag a menu bar icon off the menu bar - Removes the icon.

And the one that brought this tip on:

Control-click in iTunes 3 and you'll find that the contextual menu offers many options that weren't available by Control-click in iTunes 2, even some that can't be found ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE PROGRAM!

New Calculator

Apple has included a nifty little calculator in Jaguar. This is what you get when you click its **ADVANCED** button.



To return to the Basic mode, simply click on the **BASIC** button. Note too, that you can use a Paper

Tape feature in both modes to print out your figures.

I hate to make mistakes!

Installing a new G4 a couple of weeks ago with a new flat-panel display from Apple nearly caused me to have apoplexy. After I got the Mac plugged in and running, I noted that the display came with a CD to install special software for the screen. I decided that if Apple had included it with the monitor, it should be installed...so I did. **WHAT A MISTAKE!!!**

After I installed the monitor software and restarted the G4, all we could see was a blue screen with absolutely nothing on it. I was getting a bit panicky by the time I had tried every one of my repair utilities as well as using the Disk Utility from the Jaguar startup disk, all to no avail.

Finally, in exasperation and feeling very frustrated (I hate to lose!), I surrendered and called Apple. The technician told me that a known issue existed with the process of installing the monitor software on a Jaguar machine. The important thing to remember is that Jaguar is as up-to-date as you can be for Apple's flat-panel displays and **DOES NOT NEED THAT SPECIAL SOFTWARE.**

The cure? Well, we had to reinstall Jaguar (took over an hour). It overwrote the "bad" software and all was well.

Did You Know?

If you are in Internet Explorer and have a 14- or 15-inch screen that makes it difficult to see whole Web pages at once, there is a neat little helper available. If you hold down the Command key while you click and hold on

an open area of a page, you can slide the page around so you can see everything on it without having to scroll.

from CrazyAppleRumors.com

Woz Finally Gets Around To Installing OS 9

As Mac users everywhere begin to enjoy the recently released Jaguar update to Mac OS X, sources close to Steve Wozniak indicate the Apple co-founder has finally broken down and installed OS 9.

"I figured it was probably safe to try it out now," Wozniak said.

"I see these kids rush out and install every new update before all the bugs are worked out, and they pay the price. Or I assume they do. But, anyway, what's the rush? Where's the fire?"

Blowing dust off the unopened copy of OS 9 Wozniak bought in 1999, Wozniak carefully peeled the cellophane wrapping off the box and opened it.

"Ohhh," Wozniak moaned. "No manual? When did they stop putting a manual in?"

Clicking through the install process, Wozniak said

"I hear Sherlock 2 is really neat. And logging in via voice print. That's got to be cool. But I think Multiple Users is probably going to be the most useful feature for me."

Asked if he had used OS X, Wozniak said "Oh, no, no, no, no. I know there are lots of wild stories about things [Apple CEO] Steve [Jobs] and I did in the '70s, but I'm not like that anymore. No, slow and steady wins the race!"

Jobs himself admits to a certain amount of frustration with Wozniak.

"I've sent him several complimentary copies of OS X, but I don't think he's opened any of them," Jobs said. "I don't understand it - everyone else is trying it out."

"Oh, sure," Wozniak replied. "And I suppose if everyone else jumped off a bridge I should do that too?"

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KMUG

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This month's newsletter editor was Joe Williams



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