

Mac Matters - The Newsletter of New to Mac



El Capitan / iOS 9

Apple have continued with their update program, releasing the successor to Yosemite for Macs and iOS 9 for mobile devices. Briefly, if your Mac was capable of running Yosemite, it will run El Capitan and if your mobile device is running iOS 8 then it should run iOS 9.

Is it worth upgrading? By and large I think it is but mainly for stability and bug fixes rather than for outstanding new features.

One feature that *has* caught peoples' imagination is the new split screen mode where you can run two apps side by side on the same screen. Personally, I can't see how this is any better than opening two windows side by side on a Mac (although I have one client who disagrees with me on that!) but it could be handy on an iPad which of course does not have the windowing system. The screen of the iPhone is small enough as it is (even if you have the 6+?) without trying to see two apps at the same time.

Apple are of course bringing Mac OS X and iOS closer together all the time. This is fine as long as they don't "dumb down" Mac apps so that they are the same as iOS apps with features that iOS can't cope with being removed. One painful example of this is the Pages app. The "new" version has been around for some time now but Apple have still not given us the ability to mail merge, to link text boxes so that text flows from one to the other regardless of where they are on the page or to include lists in styles. OK, maybe not the end of the world but a pain and I know lots of people who because of this continue to use the old version as I do.

New printers

I've had a couple of situations recently where people have been unable to get a new printer working despite following the instructions carefully. Largely this has been for one of two reasons.

These days, lots of printers have wireless capability but to get them working you need them to join your wi-fi network. Some require you to connect by USB to set up the wireless side (handy for those with just an iPad!) while others broadcast their own network which your Mac has to join in order to communicate with the printer and change the settings to those of your own network. Your Mac then has to rejoin the normal wi-fi.

The second is harder to spot. Lots of wireless printers have Airprint capability - the technology needed to be able to print from mobile devices which cannot have printer drivers installed. When you try to add your new printer (from your Mac) by using System Preferences, you should find that the choices pane that allows you to choose which driver to use has both Airprint and the one supplied for your Mac selectable but unfortunately, it defaults to Airprint - not what a Mac needs. Just select the other one and your Mac will print just fine.

Mail again

Something I covered a few issues back has reared its head again recently - Mail suddenly stops working for no apparent reason. Mail has a limited range of errors it can show you so most of the time it will show you a window telling you your user name or password is not correct. Unless you've changed one of them, this is very unlikely to be the case but people do fall for it and start trying all different passwords to try to make it work!

I've mentioned this before but it's worth repeating. If your email is

working OK, you have all the settings correct but look in Mail Preferences (click on the word Mail in bold by the black Apple logo) under accounts. There's a tick box there offering to maintain account settings. Most mail servers don't understand this and it can lead to Mail altering settings erroneously - usually a port number or whether to use SSL or not - so it's worth unticking that option.

Rumours

There are always rumours about what Apple will be releasing next and whilst lots are wildly inaccurate, some aren't. Naturally I can't guarantee the accuracy of anything that follows!

The iPhone seems to attract more rumours than most products. The latest is that there will be a new one released in April. This won't be the next major version (iPhone 7) but one that's slightly smaller than the 6s and follows on from the 5c, being released as the 6c and also have two or three colour choices. It's likely we'll have to wait until the autumn for the iPhone 7.

There's a possibility of a new MacBook Air next autumn too. It's reported (admittedly by a source not renowned for reliability!) to be coming in 13" and 15" sizes - no word on whether the 11" will be included.

Festive season

I've put this issue together over the last few weeks, slotting it in between a visit to waterlogged Cumbria and Christmas shopping. It's now Christmas Eve as I write this last paragraph so, as I'm far too tight to lash out on cards for you all, I'll take this opportunity to wish you all the very best for the festive season and trust that you'll find some exciting new Apple stuff in your stocking tomorrow morning.