Mac Matters - The Newsletter of New to Mac

Anti virus

I'm often asked what to do about anti virus software and which program I recommend. My standard reply until now has been that I don't use anything myself but I can't recommend you don't either - you must make your own decision. The reason I didn't use anything is that most 'attacks' are aimed at the user rather than the Mac itself.

However, sadly, things are changing and I feel it's time I had something to protect my Macs. There are a lot more programs available for Mac than you might imagine and if you do a search for 'anti virus for Mac' you'll be surprised at how many you find. Some are free - Sophos and ClamXav for example - and have a good reputation having been around a long while. Others are produced by companies that have been in this market for Windows for years and are bringing their expertise to Mac. If you read reviews, you will often find that the same programs come out on top in most of them. This is because magazines rarely carry out their own tests on known infected computers but instead rely on independent laboratories to test them for effectiveness so are only providing their own comments on the user interface.

Things to influence your choice are how well a program detects problems, how well it avoids throwing up false positives where it thinks there's a problem but there isn't and finally, how much it slows down your machine whilst working. To save me getting loads of emails asking which I've chosen, it's Bitdefender - but do your own research, that one may not suit you!

Sierra

Apple are continuing with the annual release of new versions of the Mac operating system, the one due this autumn being called Sierra. Since Apple started releasing new versions annually, I think it's fair to say each release has been an evolution rather than a revolution. This will be the case with Sierra.

The most notable change is that Siri is being brought to the Mac which means that we can now all sit alone in our small rooms, talking to a computer! Bring on the men in white coats ;-)

The demise of film cameras not only means we can do our own processing but for many of us, where we'd have previously taken our time to get things just right before pressing the shutter button just once, we now snap away taking ten! It's not unusual for me to see people's photo libraries with upwards of 15,000 photos in. Just think how many shoe boxes they would fill were they prints. Unsurprisingly, Apple are introducing more features in Photos to enable us to find the one we're looking for amongst all these.

Apple pay is being brought to Safari so you can shop online and pay using your iPhone or Apple watch. How did we ever manage before? I can't seem to get it to work on my eMac running Tiger or my Nokia 6310 ;-)

Oh, and for those of you who have trouble remembering passwords, if you're wearing your Apple watch, it will sign you in to your Mac! Is that a good thing? If you forget your admin password it causes no end of trouble and the only way some people can remember it is to use it every time they sign in. I see trouble ahead.

Other new features rely heavily on cloud based storage so we'll soon be filling our free 5GB that Apple give us.

If you want more info, go to:

http://www.apple.com/uk/macos/sierra-preview/

iOS 10

Of course, Apple will not be neglecting it's mobile devices - iOS 10 will be released around the same time as Sierra.

I struggle with 'text speak' so all my messages are written in plain English. With iOS 10 you'll be able to send hand written text but I won't or you wouldn't be able to read them!

Maps will be getting an update with more information about restaurants, petrol stations etc. nearby. Hopefully this will apply to the UK and not just USA.

I do use the predictive text when sending a message and this is being improved to add what Apple call Contextual Predictions. So if you type 'Sarah's number is' the predictions will show you the Sarahs from your contacts with their numbers underneath so you can tap the right one. I've lost count of how many times someone has asked me for a friend's number and I've been switching back and forth between Messages and Contacts to type in the information.

Photos will be improved in much the same way as the Mac version as will Safari with the introduction of Apple pay.

Smart Alecs will be able to type in different languages without changing keyboards.

For more info go to:

http://www.apple.com/uk/ios/ios10-preview/