

PanicPack

Preliminary Design Document Draft One - 4/11/99

Introduction

With every revision of the MacOS, Apple has given us more and greater ways for us to get our work done. However, one corner of the MacOS sits sad, lonely, and neglected – like an unwanted Christmas gift the MacOS got but couldn't return. Of course, we're referring to the Apple Menu. The concept behind the Apple Menu is our inspiration – a group of useful tools that can entertain, increase productivity, handle information, etc.

With PanicPack we intend to build a whole new collection of tools – a collection designed for today's MacOS user. These tools, if left standing on their own, would be useful but would probably not be viable retail products. However, when bundled together in an attractive package, wrapped in the trademark Panic style, and with a low price, they fuse together to become an irresistible whole.

More importantly, these will be tools geared for the everyday Macintosh user: everyone from the graphic designer to the new iMac owner. They're fun, they're useful, they do exactly what they advertise as advertised, they're stable and light, there's stuff for power-users to discover, and they simply make the Mac more Mac.

[Note: All names in this document are TBD –CS]

Bundling Rationale

Here's another way to look at PanicPack from a marketing standpoint: Sanrio. Sanrio manufactures lots of useless little trinkets – tiny staplers, little tape dispensers, adhesive bandages. On their own, they're unremarkable products. However, when these trinkets are slapped with Sanrio's distinctive and irresistible characters (Hello Kitty, Batz Maru, etc.), and pulled together and bundled in a colorful cellophane-wrapped package, the whole thing borders on edible and is hard to pass up. Sanrio sells tons of this stuff. In basic theory, we intend to make PanicPack the Sanrio of software.

Design Goals

Do one thing, do it well. It's a bit of a tired cliché, but it stands up well here. These tools are NOT end-all-be-all – we will not spend effort trying to trump every potential competitor feature in every which way. Rather, we will spend time defining a basic set of *really cool* tasks for each tool, instead of fifty kinda cool tasks, and stick to them. We won't want to overwhelm – there will always be another program that can do more than we can. Instead of fighting that, let us make simplicity our strong suit. This is better for maintenance, and for our sanity. Also, as LinkPad and Transmit has shown us, our customers appreciate our clean approach to making really neat stuff.

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Each of these tools should not take much time to develop; i.e. one or two months.

Tool 1: ThoughtPad

With the creation of LinkPad, we seemed to really strike a nerve with specific groups of people. LinkPad did exactly one thing: it accepted links in a drag-and-drop fashion, and would check them off when they were later dragged back to the browser. We likened it to a “storage bin” of links – not a bookmark manager by any means, but a place to put your “to see”s. LinkPad’s ramp from zero to organized seemed to please a lot of people.

ThoughtPad is LinkPad on steroids, but without the side-effects: leveraging the power of basic Macintosh interface conventions to create a single, simple, powerful place to store your stuff. ThoughtPad will usher in a new era free of Post-It covered monitors and unused Day Timers.

Details

Upon launch, ThoughtPad has a single, blank page. The page encourages users to start typing, or to create new pages. Pages are accessible via tabs at the top of the window. ThoughtPad can have multiple windows, each with their own pages.

When a user creates a new page, they are offered the follow page styles:

- Text
Textedit, like NotePad and SimpleText combined.
- To-Do
A Finder-like list with three columns; a checkbox (is the task done?), a priority number (1-9), and the description of the task. Users can, of course, sort by all three. New To-Do items can be created by clicking a New button at the bottom of the To-Do page.
- Link
LinkPad 2, basically. Links can be dragged and dropped onto a link page, and when they’re dragged back off they’re marked as viewed. Users can set icons for the links.
- Snippets
A place to put drag and drop snippets other than the Finder; when the user drags text onto a snippet page, the first sentence or so is used for the name of the snippet, and the snippet is stored. Snippets could be useful for programmers or web page designers to keep commonly used code, or could be

great for signatures, etc. Perhaps snippets could also handle graphics?

□ List

When creating a list page, the user defines the columns in the list. For example, a user could create an organized list page, and define 3 columns: “First Name”, “Last Name”, and “Phone Number”. Then the user could populate that data by dragging and dropping (could Steve’s special list concept fill out the fields automatically if a drag and drop contains two names and a phone number?), or by adding new entries via menu (and icon?).

[Any other useful styles? –CS]

[Maybe books, instead of tabs?]

All the page styles share common traits: items can be deleted by dragging them from the trash, hitting delete, or selecting “delete” from the file menu.

Every item in a list-like page also has a “Get Info” window where more information about the item (as appropriate) is displayed. This can be date created, date modified, size in bytes or words (for snippets), full URL or descriptive name (for links), etc.

Also of interest is ThoughtPad’s server feature, great for people who use multiple Macs (one at home, one at work, etc.) and want to synchronize their information. If a user turns this feature on, ThoughtPad will listen on a specific TCP/IP port, and if the user connects to their machine with another copy of ThoughtPad, the client will synchronize the data up to the server machine. Any changes will also be reflected on the server machine. This allows one user’s personal data to be used everywhere.

Questions

[Questions go here]

Control strip?

Tool 2: Audion

Take an audio CD player, add MP3 playback, CDDB title lookups, give it customizable faces, make it very stable and MacOS X ready, add strong playlist support, and support the ShoutCast streaming MP3 system, and you’ve got Audion.

Details

One aspect of Audion worth noting is the configurable face system. Basically, the resource fork of a face contains at least four PICTs:

- An off state PICT, which contains the entire interface in a neutral state.
- An on-state PICT, which contains the entire interface with the elements “pressed” i.e. when clicked
- A mask PICT, which contains a mask for the shape of the interface
- Any amount of numbers PICTs, which contains a selection of individual number graphics used to create the time readout of the interface

These elements are brought together via a series of special template resources, each one used for an individual element. For example, resource “face” #128 might be for the “play clicked” button, and would contain five numbers: the PICT resource containing the button, and the four x and y co-ordinates defining the rectangle of the graphic. Using this system will allow anyone with Photoshop skills to put together a powerful Audion Face.

Tool 3: Image Finder

With a growing number of consumers taking hundreds of digital photos and making lots of web pages, it’s getting harder to find images on a crowded hard-drive. Image Finder takes a simple – yet effective – approach to solving this problem.

Details

Upon launch, Image Finder presents a Finder-like list view with all major volumes. The user can expand, via disclosure triangles, through their folders and files. However, whenever an image file is encountered in a directory, a thumbnail of that image is listed to the left of the name of the file. This thumbnail can be of virtually any user-configurable size, and is generated using QuickTime 3’s extensive image file-format support. The finder-like list offers extra columns, such as data fork size, and image dimensions. Users can double-click files to launch them as expected, drag and drop them, etc. Users can also “Get Info” on an image file to learn lots more about the file.

As a preference, the user can choose to only show image files, i.e. any non-image files will not be shown in the list.

As an extra bonus item, Image Finder comes with a “create thumbnails” contextual menu module. When used on a folder (or an open folder containing image files), this contextual menu will generate 32-bit custom icon thumbnails for each image file recognized in a directory in one quick, easy pass.

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Tool 4: Task Timer

On the clock? Paid by the hour? Need to keep track of your kids' internet usage? The Task Timer is a handy tool – a simple, stopwatch-like timer that also keeps track of individual jobs.

Details

When launched, Task Timer has a time display, a start/stop button, and a disclosure triangle. When the start button is clicked, a dialog box asks the user to name the task being timed. When the stop button is clicked, the task is added to a list. Clicking the disclosure triangle reveals this list, which displays task name, time started, time stopped, and duration of the task (all configurable via preferences.) This list is saved and can be deleted manually; additionally it can be exported to a text file.

Tool 5: [unknown]

Bonus 1: FunkyPoker