Pixelmator: Great value for image editing

by Sue Beal

September's meeting, with only 12 people in attendance, was one of the most intimate groups we've had in a long time! Everyone participated. Not pictured: Nadia & Jim, and Karen took the picture!

September's meeting presented us with quite a challenge when Joe Kukella, the scheduled presenter, had to cancel with 2 days notice. Karen and I jumped into the fray, looking around on the internet for a canned presentation on the Pixelmator topic, hoping we could at least show the product, even without Joe's unique take on it. We found a lot of reviews and tutorials, and I was most impressed by what I found. I couldn't even *spell* Pixelmator on Tuesday, and by Thursday night, we had a presentation on it. (It helps that I am a Photoshop user!) And thanks, Karen, for the help.

So first we talked about the tools and functions available in this Apple-friendly photo editor. Then we watched a dozen short videos demonstrating how some of the tools work, followed by an analysis of how it stacks up against Photoshop and Elements. Spoiler alert: it beats Elements and gives Photoshop some great competition for the price, which is just $29.99!

The Pixelmator interface.

I'm borrowing heavily from a review online from TopTen Review, adding my comments in italics:

The wide variety of tools and features available in Pixelmator rival that of most high-end Mac photo editing software. Pixelmator's user interface features black, floating windows, which give it an elegance not found in similar apps. *(Some don't love the black in the interface.)*

Pixelmator includes all the basic editing tools you need to get the job done. It offers advanced features, such as vector shapes and detailed control over text tool options. There are powerful tools, such as the Healing tool, which can remove an unwanted object, making it appear as if the object wasn't originally in the shot. The Content-Aware Fill tool intuitively fills in spots based on samples taken from the area around a selected object.

This *made-exclusively-for-the*-Mac photo editing software includes essential color tools like the Sponge tool, which adds or subtracts color. Additionally, the Dodge and Burn tools can help lighten and darken, respectively, any specific part of your image you wish.

The Eyedropper tool allows you to copy a color from an object for use in a different image. Removing red eye is easy, too, and the drawing and painting tools are a joy to use.

OUR NEXT MEETING:

Thursday, Oct. 9, 2014

7pm at Key Largo Library Community Room MM 101.4 Oceanside

The Digital Traveler

with Diane Marshall and John Hammerstrom

Here's a look at the apps, gadgets and websites for each stage of the digital traveler's trip. The talk will be broken into three parts:

Before the Trip--tools to help plan, pack and prepare for your adventure

During the Trip--tools to ensure your trip is safe, comfortable, easy and what you expected

After the Trip--tools to keep those good memories when you return home.

At the end we hope others will share their favorite tools for travel with our group as well.

Beginners: Come at 6:30 for Beginner's Circle - bring your questions and get help.

About UKMUG

UKMUG meets at the Key Largo Library Community Room on the second Thursday of each month. Speakers begin at 7pm, and may go as late as 9pm.

Beginners can come at 6:30 with questions, and we encourage others to come and help.

Voluntary annual dues are collected in Jan-Feb-Mar: $25.

Pixelmator

Pixelmator has a nice set of brush tools, and extensive sets of painting and retouching tools, all of which gives it a real edge in comparison to other apps. The color correction tools are intuitive, easy to use and powerful. The Selection tools work well and are pixel-accurate, making it easy to get those hard-to-select details. This Mac photo editing software also supports the creation and editing of layers – a major feature that is missing, or poorly executed, in similar photo editing apps.

With this software, you can quickly create layers and edit with an assortment of options, including blending, adding layer and clipping masks, performing opacity changes and more. Another impressive feature is the ability to use a Mac's iSight camera to create layers for a picture composition. The Web Colors plugin gives you the ability to select hex colors for HTML and CSS software applications. The Slice and Trim tools make it easy to optimize your photos for use on the web.

With a catalog of over 160 creative effects, you can add that special something to make your photos stand out and become works of art. Popular filters like Vintage or Miniaturize are just a small sampling of the types of effects you can use.

If you want to utilize batch processing, you can use Apple's Automator to set up automated tasks, like resizing, adding effects, basic enhancements and file conversion.

Platform

Pixelmator runs best on Intel Macs with OS X version 10.6 and higher. The software takes advantage of the features of the latest OS X, including the 64-bit architecture, Color Sync, Quartz Composer and Automator. The extra speed gained from the 64-bit compatibility is nice, and Pixelmator runs very smoothly on 64-bit systems.

Organizing

As with most Mac photo editing software, you will have to use iPhoto as the default picture organizer and importer. However, Pixelmator ties into iPhoto better than most others do. Using Photo Browser, Pixelmator will automatically pull up any photos, events, albums and libraries located in iPhoto. Pixelmator even displays these contents when iPhoto isn't open. It also shows the picture folders on your Mac, the Photo Booth app and more.

If you make any changes in iPhoto (i.e., import new pictures, create a new Album, etc.), you won't see them in Pixelmator's Photo Browser right away. You'll need to quit this Mac photo editing software and then re-launch to see the changes. Make a copy of the images you wish to work on to preserve the originals.

Sharing

You can share your images easily to social media sites like Facebook and Flickr from within the program itself. You can also send your edited images as email attachments or export them directly to iPhoto or Aperture.

Importing

Getting photos into Pixelmator is easy. One way is to click on File, Open and then navigate through the dialog boxes to find the photo you want to edit. You can grab photos directly off a camera or memory card or set up iPhoto to be your default photo organizer, so when you double-click on an image to edit, the photo will automatically open in Pixelmator.

Output Capabilities

Using the Export option will pull up a nice-looking dialog box with options to save the photo in a format of your liking. These include JPEG, PNG, TIFF, Photoshop (.psd), PDF and Other. You can adjust the quality level, and Pixelmator will calculate the final file size. The "Other" option features a dropdown menu with some additional file formats, like BMP.

Export for Web can quickly save a special web-optimized version for sharing online at websites, social networking pages and more. However, you'll need to manually upload the photo to the website of your choice, or use iPhoto's vast sharing options.

Help & Support

Tech support for Pixelmator is extensive, with options that include email, a user forum, documentation and a FAQs section. There are a number of text and video tutorials on the website, as well as links to third-party tutorials.

Summary:

While it's tough to compete with the extensive list of tools and features of the top ranked software (*Photoshop*), Pixelmator does a superb job of offering a terrific photo editing experience. The user interface is great, the tools and features are plentiful and the learning curve isn't steep at all. In short, Pixelmator is one of the best Mac photo editing software programs available. *MU*

Pixelmator Tutorials recommended by Karen Beal:

Setting Pixelmator up for the First Time: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TuZUNyA5ih8

Clone/Dodge/Burn & More
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PyWubSsFNPM

Good Styles
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cl-YtTmQ0zI

Effects
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnJPHn-x4q4

Add the Moon (good voice)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gn5aq9iF7oc

Filter Effects (good ones)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ktBrbkarw4

Rainy Text
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLbj5N--wq0

MacMost: a number of good ones
https://www.youtube.com/user/macmostvideo/search?query=pixelmator

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Pixelmator has a free trial version vailable online (saves with a watermark). It requires OS 10.9.1 to run.

Fran Young joined us for the first time. Fran is Mary Anne Roper's sister, so she's got Mac genes!

An iCloud Drive warning before updating to iOS 8

from CNET; submitted by John Hammerstrom

Use iCloud to share files between a Mac and iOS? Make sure to wait until iCloud Drive is released before opting in to the new service.

iCloud Drive is an integral part of the latest operating systems, iOS 8 and OS X Yosemite, from Apple. The new service from Apple allows you to browse, edit, and share files from the "cloud" similar to what's currently possible with the likes of Dropbox and Google Drive.

For those who currently use iCloud to share files between Apple devices, you'll need to hold off on upgrading to iCloud Drive when iOS 8 launches on September 17.

Content stored in iCloud Drive is only accessible from devices running iOS 8 and/or OS X Yosemite. Meaning, if you upgrade your device to iOS 8 and enable iCloud Drive, any files you store in iCloud from your iOS device will not be available on your Mac and vice versa, until Yosemite is available.

If the iOS 8 setup process remains similar to what 9to5Mac has shown here, you're given the option to upgrade to iCloud Drive or wait. Select the latter and keep using iCloud as you have been until Yosemite launches, which Apple previously announced is scheduled for the fall. Of course, this isn't a problem for you if you only share files between iOS devices or use Windows.

Then again, you could always join the public beta of Yosemite if you are set on using iCloud Drive right away.

For more helpful iOS 8 tips, be sure to check out our complete guide to iOS 8:

http://www.cnet.com/how-to/the-complete-guide-to-ios-8/

iOS 8 looks to be one of the most feature-packed updates to Apple's mobile platform since the launch of the App Store. **MU**

"The computer says I need to upgrade my brain to be compatible with the new software."

SPAM: Unwanted Texts and Email

Many consumers find unwanted texts and email – which can include commercial messages known as spam – annoying and time-consuming. And unwanted texts to mobile phones and other mobile devices can be intrusive and costly.

Two laws – the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA) and the Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing (CAN-SPAM) Act – address spam. Find out more:

http://www.fcc.gov/guides/spam-unwanted-text-messages-and-email

Special thanks to Kim Carter at the Islamorada Chamber of Commerce. **MU**

Travel Tip: How to Read a Map Offline

from petergreenberg.com, submitted by Karen Beal

There are several ways get directions on your smartphone or tablet. But until recently, you needed a Wi-Fi signal or 3G connection to access that information. Here's how to read a map offline.

TripAdvisor has updated its app to let you download maps, reviews, and photos.

Just search for the city or location while you're connected, tap a button, and the information will be downloaded to your phone. We're talking about as many as 300 city maps around the globe.

But, there are some other tricks you should know about.

If you have the latest version of Google Maps on your iPhone or Android, you can download the information to work offline. Sign in, find the location you want, and then type in the phrase "OK Maps." That will bring up a prompt to save the map onto your device.

City Maps 2Go was designed specifically for offline use with road maps and points of interest. What's really cool is the GPS works even if you're not connected, so you can track your location without using any data.

Another trick? Take a screenshot of your map, so you have a quick backup in case you lose connection on the road.

For more information, visit http://petergreenberg.com/category/travel-tools/apps-technology **MU**

Even Apple can't bypass your passcode

submitted by John Hammerstrom, with help from David Perera and Erin Mershon

Apple has set the encryption on iOS 8 such that even Apple itself can't unlock your iPhone if it doesn't know your passcode, the company announced last night on a detailed new privacy website. The security changes means Apple won't be able to turn over evidence in response to court orders — or, if it did, would only turn over a gibberish of numbers. "On devices running iOS 8, your personal data such as photos, messages (including attachments), email, contacts, call history, iTunes content, notes, and reminders is placed under the protection of your passcode," the company said. "Unlike our competitors, Apple cannot bypass your passcode and therefore cannot access this data. So it's not technically feasible for us to respond to government warrants for the extraction of this data from devices in their possession running iOS 8."

The new initiatives are sure to win plaudits from the privacy community and possibly from security advocates who took Apple to task over an iCloud vulnerability that seemingly allowed hackers to brute force their way into celebrities' accounts and steal nude photos. The announcement also comes amid an all-out marketing blitz leading up to the release of the iPhone 6 and Apple Watch.

Read the notice: http://www.apple.com/privacy/ *MU*

The Apple customer-support site that's built just for you

from MacWorld, submitted by George Fisher

You've got a Mac, an iPhone, maybe an iPad or two in your household, and you have a problem. Maybe one of them's got a cracked screen, and you want to find out if it's still under warranty (and what that warranty covers). Maybe one of them won't start up, and you want to find out what to do. Maybe you just have a question that requires an Apple expert. Turns out you can find out all that and more in one place—a place that a lot of Apple users have never heard of.

You probably know about Apple's standard Support website. But I'm betting you haven't been to **your own personal Support Profile page**. There, you can view a list of all of your Apple products, check their warranty coverage, access troubleshooting resources, and contact Apple's support team. Here's how to take advantage of all that.

http://www.macworld.com/article/2599296/the-apple-customer-support-site-thats-built-just-for-you.html *MU*

Special thanks to Denise Malefyt.

'WE'VE FLOWN INTO AN iCLOUD'

Apps you can't do without in Mavericks

submitted by Graham Thomas

Although Mavericks gets much of the glory for its elegant design and power, you can't really do much, productivity-wise, from your Desktop without a snappy application. Get acquainted with these iMac applications you can't do without. Even if you don't use one or two of these great tools now, you'll likely realize that you need and want them in the future.

Some of these applications are built in to OS X — read that as free — whilst others you must buy.

DVDs and CDs on your iMac

If your iMac has an internal SuperDrive (or you've added an external USB optical drive to your iMac), come explore the best two DVD applications around for your Mavericks machine.

Watching DVD movies with aplomb

Face it — that gorgeous widescreen 21.5" or 27" flat-panel monitor on your iMac is perfect for watching DVD movies. Thanks to the good people in Cupertino, you'll find that the Mavericks DVD Player does a great job at screening all your favorite DVD films. By default, DVD Player runs automatically when you load a DVD, including those that you create yourself.

Yes, they really named it Toast

Do you need to record audio and data CDs or DVD-Vs on your iMac? The Cadillac of recording software for the Mac was, is, and will likely always be the unlikely named Toast, from Roxio. The latest version is Toast 11 Titanium, available online for about $80.

The built-in audio recording features in iTunes are certainly fine, and the discs that it produces are compatible with any audio CD player or DVD player that you're likely to find. You can also burn files to media without a separate application.

Management and communication

Both Calendar and Apple Mail are mighty applications, bent on organizing things: your time, calendar, and/or your Internet e-mail traffic. (They do a great job, too.) Apple provides both in OS X, so you can keep your credit card in your pocket or purse.

Staying on top of things with Calendar

Calendar is one of those oddities in the computer world. Unlike iTunes or iMovie, it's not particularly sexy (in a multimedia way), and it doesn't get oodles of coverage in the glossy Macintosh magazines. Still, everybody eventually ends up using it. Calendar as an unsung hero. (And free.)

One doggone good e-mail application

E-mail might not take center stage in the computer magazines these days, but consider what your life would be like with a substandard, whip-and-buggy e-mail application — almost as bad as no e-mail at all.

The best e-mail applications (like Apple Mail) have powerful, trainable spam filters that improve automatically as you manually check your junk mail. A first-class performer (like Apple Mail) offers fully automated scripting for common tasks, snazzy backgrounds, fonts and colors, and the ability to create HTML-format messages with embedded images and objects. Are you seeing a pattern here?

One great feature in Apple Mail is the ability to organize your messages by threads. (In plain English, a thread groups replies so that they can be read as an actual discussion.)It's free, and it's fun — go, Apple Mail, go!

iMacs and productivity

Sooner or later, you're going to need the ability to create flashy, professional-looking documents from your iMac, or you might need to run an application that's not available for Macs. This section covers two productivity applications — Parallels Desktop and iWork — and the serious stuff they can do.

Windows 7 or 8 on your iMac without rebooting

Sure, you can use the Mavericks Boot Camp feature to set up a Windows system on your iMac, but you have to reboot to use Windows, and it's very difficult to share Mac data with your Windows application.

Luckily, Parallels offers a solution: Parallels Desktop for Mac. The program sells for about $80, but this doesn't include a licensed copy of Windows. (Yeah, you have to provide your own.) However, this nifty program can easily run virtually all Windows XP, Vista, and Seven programs — without rebooting your iMac — complete with support for external USB devices, Ethernet networks, the Internet, and your iMac printer.

iWork Suite

Every owner of a Mac should try the three free iWork applications before jumping onto the Microsoft productivity bandwagon. (Owners of older iMacs will still have to buy the iWork applications from the App Store.) Most people simply don't use or need all the features and hoo-hah that's built into the MS Office applications! The three iWork applications produce documents that are as good-looking as anything from the Office suite!

Maintenance

The following two applications are indispensable utility tools that every Mac owner should master.

If you're not already using Disk Utility, you should - on a regular basis. Most Mac owners think of Disk Utility only for checking internal and external hard drives. But don't forget the most important function that Disk Utility offers: the ability to fix file and folder permission problems.

Protecting your iMac from viral infection should be a top priority. Get yourself an antivirus application — one that automatically checks the discs that you load as well as the stuff that you download. Check out VirusBarrier 2013 or the excellent freeware application ClamXav 2.

Files

Care to compress a folder full of files to save space on your hard drive or maybe send them via e-mail? Perhaps you'd like to use the power of Unix to perform file manipulation miracles that are practically impossible by using the mouse. Read on.

Mavericks has built-in support for compressing and decompressing Zip archives. Mavericks can unarchive a Zip file when necessary — just double-click the archive icon — and you can right-click a file or folder and then choose Compress from the menu to create a Zip archive.

Terminal

If you're interested in doing the command-lines dance, know how this must-have application is a little different from the others: You type your commands manually, and there are no icons or graphics. You're in the character-based Twilight Zone, and only the bravest of Mac novices will venture there.

When you launch the Terminal application, you open a window into the Unix core that lies underneath OS X. Suddenly you can do things that you can't do from the Finder menu.

CUSTOMER SERVICE DEPT.

GLASBERGE

"Who picked 'I Can't Get No Satisfaction'
to be our on-hold music?"

Come at
6:30 for the
Beginners Circle:

Bring your laptop
and your questions
at 6:30, and for a half-hour
prior to the main meeting
we'll have experienced
folks available to help,
one on one, or in
small groups.

FREE CLASSES

The Apple Store at the Falls has free classes every Saturday! They also have one-on-one training, workshops and the Genius Bar. Call or check the web for more info:

Apple Store at The Falls
305-234-4565

8888 SW 136th Street
Miami, FL 33176
Mon-Sat:10-9:30pm
Sun: noon-7pm

http://www.apple.com/retail/thefalls

OUR LINKS ARE LIVE!

If you haven't figured it out yet, try it. Click on any blue, underlined link in our Macaholics Unanimous newsletter and it will take you to the web.

Did you see that picture of you, taken at the last meeting?

http://ukmug.pbworks.com/

Monroe County Recycling Collection Center:

MM 100.1 Oceanside (Magnolia St.)
453-0788

E-RECYCLING: 2nd & 4th Wed. every month, 10am - 2pm

E-waste: Monitors & Computers Batteries, Televisions, All Telephones & FAX Machines, Printers / Copiers, DVD / VCR Players, Radios & Speakers, Discs & Cassettes
Also taking Hazardous Household Waste.

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