

Tiger Update No. 1

After my initial disappointment with Mac OS X 10.4 (Tiger), many of you asked if progress has been made in getting 10.4 ready for prime time. The answer is: *some*.

Apple has released two updates: 10.4.1 and 10.4.2. Some problems have been fixed, many still exist and some new ones have been created (this is how upgrades always go). Here is a list of a few of the problems with 10.4.2 that have been reported on the *MacFixIt* web site:

- System fails to startup/shutdown properly
- Mail 2.0.2: Inability to send mail
- Spotlight not finding files with asterisks
- Menu items disappear
- FireWire drives refusing to unmount
- FireWire drives spontaneously unmounting
- Loss of Ethernet connectivity
- Sleep Issues
- iCal search broken
- AirPort/Wireless connectivity lost
- AirPort connectivity fixes
- Delayed startup problems

MacFixIt reports that problems have decreased with each new Tiger update. With the original 10.4 release, about 70% of users reported problems (over 25% reported major problems). With 10.4.1, users reporting problems dropped to 50%. Now that 10.4.2 is out, users reporting problems are down to only 30%. While that is still a very high number, it shows real improvement. If all goes well, 10.4.3 is expected to ship in a week or two; keep your fingers crossed.

As for the problems that I reported in June:

- The 10.4.2 update fixed my Home folder that was broken by 10.4.
- My external FireWire drive, that was killed by 10.4, is still quite dead.
- *Mail.app 2.0.2* still has tiny toolbar buttons, hard to read window layout and requires a separate window to see progress in sending and receiving. Some improve-

ment has been made in fixing IMAP problems. However, new connectivity problems have appeared. Fortunately, I haven't experienced these.

- *Mail.app 2.0.2*: The problem with placing picture attachments inline is solved.
- The high-pitched squeal is unchanged. Apple tech support has not found a reason for, or a solution to, this problem. Only a few people are reporting this (lucky me!).
- The cute audio cues for many *Finder* functions can now be turned off in the *Sound* system preference.
- Broken font menus that displayed gibberish fonts have been fixed.
- Dashboard is still clumsy and Widget quality is still spotty.
- Screenshots (pictures of how your Mac's screen looks) are no longer saved as .pdf files, but as .png files. No change here.
- A new problem has emerged. When my Mac restarts, mouse tracking is initially at the fastest level. This causes the mouse to skitter about almost uncontrollably. The *Keyboard and Mouse* system preference will reset mouse tracking to my preferred speed, but the system preference shows the preferred setting and not the actual setting.

Now, what about Spotlight? Last month I reported major problems with the Spotlight search feature. This is the most highly touted new feature in Tiger, and it simply didn't work. I could get no useful results from a Spotlight search and since Spotlight replaced all of the older search functions, there was no search alternative.

Nothing I tried would get Spotlight to work. I purged and rebuilt its index database many times. I re-installed Tiger twice (I used the *Archive and Install* option to preserve my Home folder data). Nothing worked and Apple Tech Support, though they tried mightily, could find no answer.

Spotlight now works. In desperation, I used the “nuclear option”: I made a complete back up, erased the hard drive and reinstalled everything from scratch. This is a nasty job, best avoided, and something I haven’t had to do since the Mac OS X Public Beta five years ago. *Glory be*, Spotlight now works. However, it was hardly worth the effort.

Flawed design. Spotlight now finds what I ask it to find. However, Spotlight makes me work a lot harder than the old Find command ever did. This extra effort is caused by poor design choices, not technological problems.

For example, compare the old Find command to Spotlight in searching for a document that has “virus” as part of its name:

Old Find Command

- 1) Choose Find from the File menu.
- 2) Type in “virus.”
- 3) Result window shows 1 file.
- 4) Click the file to see its location.

Spotlight

- 1) Click the Spotlight menu icon.
- 2) Type in “virus.”
- 3) Partial result window appears.
- 4) Click Show All button to open complete result window.
- 5) Complete result window shows 315 results. Most results are not files with “virus” in their name. Spotlight searches for any mention of the word “virus” and returns anything that matches, so it is necessary to manually search through listings of folders, emails, applications, bookmarks, documents and more. To make it harder, Spotlight truncates some results so that the listing for documents (it found 47) only lists the first five and a link labeled: 42 more...
- 6) Click the 42 more... link. All 47 results now show. However, only one result has “virus” as part of its name. The 46 others must have the word “virus” somewhere inside, but in searching I wanted only documents named with the word “virus” as part of the name.
- 7) In the listing, to the right of the the document’s title and date of last modification, is a tiny, light blue, letter “i” in a circle. Click the tiny letter “i” to get more information on the document.
- 8) An information sheet opens that shows the location of the document. I got this in step 4 of the old way.

Of note are other interface problems such as the Show All button, mentioned in step 4, doesn’t look like a button, an unsophisticated user would not know to

click it. Similarly, the tiny letter “i” in a circle that stands for Information is so insignificant that the average user would miss seeing it entirely.

The bottom line on Spotlight, for me, is that it is much harder to use and much slower than the Find command that it replaces. While Spotlight can search in obscure ways that the Find command cannot, taking away a familiar, efficient and functionally focused tool and replacing it with a poorly designed multi-tool is not a step in the right direction.

August Tip —

Perhaps you’ve received an email from someone new and you’d like to add them to your address book. You can do this without typing anything, like so:

Mac OS X Mail.app: Select the email from the new sender and choose *Add Sender to Address Book* from the *Message* menu.

Microsoft Entourage and Outlook Express: Select the email from the new sender and choose *Add to Address Book* from the *Tools* menu.

Netscape 7: Click a name in the *From* field in a message you’ve received, and then select *Add to Address Book* from the drop-down list.

AOL X: Open the email from the new sender and click the *Add Address* button.

AOL 5: Open the email from the new sender and click the *Remember Address* button.

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