- **Use auto-hide.** If you keep your dock at the bottom middle of the screen, you may prefer to have it in auto-hide mode. This keeps the dock out of the way until its ready to use. To activate Dock Preferences, pick it from the Apple menu. You can also click-and-hold at a spot on the dock near (but not on) the vertical line. If you've hacked the dock to be movable, you'll see those options in this pop-up, along with magnification and a shortcut to the Dock Preferences panel.

- **Turn off bounce and magnification.** Unless you like it for the sheer thrill effect, disable both magnification and icon bouncing in the Dock Preferences panel. They're great for showing off, but I find the bounce effect seems to increase my awareness of the application launch problem, and the magnification isn't really necessary. I've had over 30 items in my dock without needing to have any of them magnified; I personally find the jumpy effect distracting.

- **Pick a reasonable size for the dock.** You can make the dock nearly microscopic; you can also make it huge. Neither extreme is probably best; I use a setting that's nearly at the halfway point. You can also resize the dock by dragging on the vertical bar; if you do so while holding option, the dock will only show you sizes where icons are not interpolated.

- **Eliminate poof remnants.** There's an OS X bug which will occasionally leave a remnant of a 'poof' on the screen. If this happens, simply open ProcessViewer (in the Utilities folder), highlight the Dock process, and tell it to quit. It will, and it will then restart immediately, and the poofs should be gone.

- **Make things stay in the dock.** When you launch an app, the icon is added to the dock. However, if you then quit the app, the icon will vanish. If you'd like to keep it in the dock (I don't, since I have a separate launcher), just control-click on the icon and select **Keep in Dock** from the pop-up menu.

- **Dock Extras can be stored on either side of the dock.** The dock extras (battery monitor, Displays, and Signal Strength) can be placed on either side of the vertical divider bar. Find them in /Applications/Dock Extras.

The Finder

Adjusting to life with the OS X Finder takes some time. Although it's possible to make the Finder work much like it did in OS 9, that's not, in my opinion, the most efficient thing to do. Here are some ways to put the power of the new OS X Finder to work for you, instead of feeling like you're fighting a losing battle, trying to make OS X work like OS 9.

- **Adapt to column view.** One of the things OS X does worst is resizing windows full of icons. If you attempt to use the OS X Finder like you did in OS 9, you'll be doing that a lot. Instead, try living in a column-view oriented Finder. Here's a reduced screenshot of my desktop:
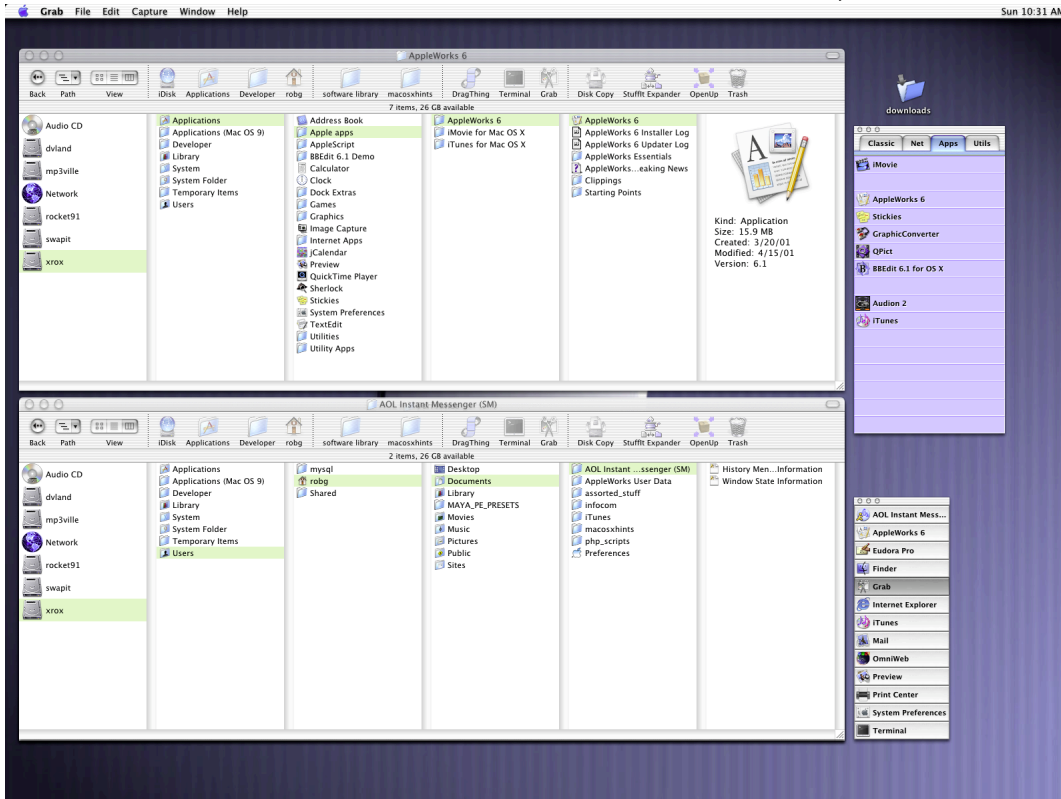

As you can see, it's what most would call a 'minimalist' desktop. I have two large (remember - use as many pixels as you can stand on your display!) column-view windows, my main DragThing dock (in purple), the DragThing Process Dock (so I can switch to a particular app without popping up the dock), and one lone folder (my online downloads folder). With this basic setup, and some work in the toolbar (which I'll discuss shortly), I find myself quite productive in the Finder.

With two column-view windows open at all times, I hardly ever resize a window. Occasionally I'll open a new window (for a disk image installer) and resize it, but that's the exception. I do everything in the two column-view windows. Want to move or copy a bunch of files? Pick the destination in window #2, highlight the files in window #1, and drag them. Want to compare two folders? Point window #1 to folder #1, and window #2 to folder #2.

Customizing the toolbar to complement the two-window Finder is the next step towards productivity.

- **Utilize the customizable toolbar.** The customizable toolbar is one of the new Finder's more useful innovations. By taking advantage of its power, you can truly put the Finder to work for you. Here's how I've put my toolbar together.
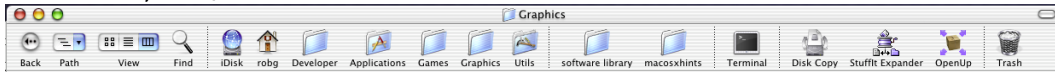
There are basically four sections - from left to right, they are: File Navigation, System Folders, Personal Folders and Apps, and Drag-n-Drop Apps. A closer look at each section will show how it's used on my toolbar.
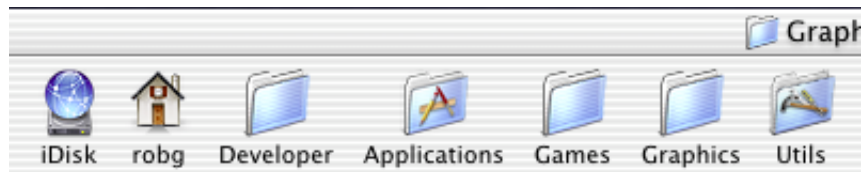
File Navigation:

Standard buttons here include **Back** for prior selections, **Path** for a path pop-up, View to change the style (seldom used), and **Find** to open Sherlock. I can do everything I need to do navigationally with these four buttons.
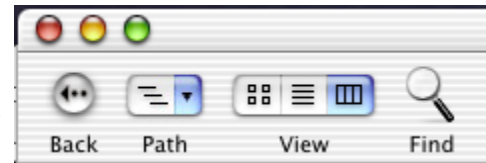
System Folders:

I keep my most-accessed system-wide folders in this section, including my iDisk and my home directory. This makes nearly any folder I need to reach only one or two clicks away. And remember, folders in the toolbar can have items dropped onto them to move the item into the folder.
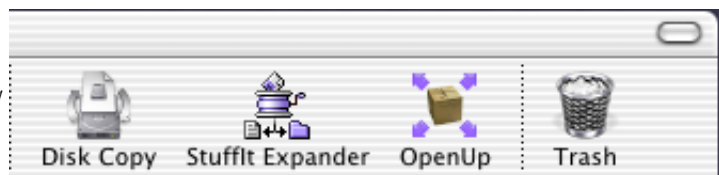
Personal Folders and Apps:

This small section is for a couple of folders that I use all the time. Again, direct access is only one click away. I also do a lot of work in the terminal, and love having it a half-a-mouse movement away; keeping it in the toolbar means I can get to it quicker than I can with either the dock or DragThing.
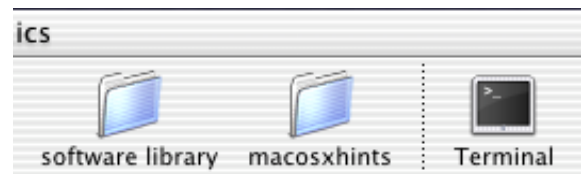
Drag-n-Drop Apps:

This is one of the most useful sections of my toolbar. Drag and drop apps are now just a quarter-inch away from most windows that I'm in. And the trash can is incredibly convenient as well. There's a slight trick to getting the trash onto the toolbar. Use TinkerTool to make the trash visible on the desktop, drag it into the toolbar, then use TinkerTool to turn it off from the desktop. You can also, of course, use the **Delete** item from the toolbar customizer; I just think the trash can looks nicer!

To customize your toolbar, you can either select View -> Customize Toolbar, or you can shift-click on the oblong button at the right edge of every finder window. Folders can simply be dragged to and from the bar at any time.

- **Know your Finder/dock shortcuts.** Although command-N for a new window may feel alien at first, you'll soon discover it makes a lot of sense. You spend more time making new windows than you do new folders, so it's good that Apple put the easier-to-use command on the most common task. Here are some other handy shortcuts you should know that make working in the Finder easier:
    - Option-click on an icon in the dock to hide the current app when switching
    - Cmd-option-click on an icon in the dock to hide all apps when switching
    - Press Option while looking at the pop-up menu for a dock app and "Quit" will change into "Force Quit"
    - Cmd-option-D will toggle the dock from hidden to visible or vice-versa
    - Cmd-tab and shift-cmd-tab cycle forward and backward between running apps
    - Cmd-F brings up Sherlock

- **Don't rearrange the pre-installed items.** Although tempting, in the current version of OS X, moving pre-installed Apple programs and folders can cause all sorts of problems. It's simpler just to accept that OS X has (at present) a forced structure of sorts for certain items. Add your own folders for organizing the items you add, but leave Apple's stuff where it is. This may be changed in a future update, but for now, you'll have a lot less trouble if you don't go moving things around.

- **Use the status bar.** Make sure you've enabled the status bar (View -> Show Status Bar) so you can quickly see the quantity and size of items in volumes and folders.

- **Get Info on drives within a Finder window.** If you're trying to see how big your hard drives are, and how much room is left on each one, don't do Get Info on the volume on the desktop. This information is strangely missing. Instead, Get Info on the drive from within any Finder window, and you'll see the details you're looking for.

- **Watch the eject key!** If you have the new Pro keyboard, the Eject key will eject **all** mounted removable volumes and disk images, not just the one you have selected in the Finder.

- **Trash the prefs if an app is misbehaving.** Just like in OS 9, the easiest way to try to fix a misbehaving application is to trash the preferences file. In OS X, prefs are stored for each user, and they're in your User directory, then inside Library -> Preferences. Drag the preference file out of the folder and relaunch the application and see if the problems vanish.

Key Applications: Internet Explorer

- **IE 5.1 is a little buggy.** Of the currently available OS X browsers, IE has the best standards compliance, but it's also got some bugs. In particular, IE has the ability to make OS X feel distinctly **non** multitasking, as you'll get the spinning beach ball whenever your browser is busy doing something, including downloading files. There's no known fix for this problem, other than a hoped-for update from Microsoft.

- **Find missing downloads.** When you download a file with IE, it won't show up where you think it should be. To make it show, double-click the downloaded file in the Download Manager, then click Reveal in Finder.

- **Make IE use the right Expander.** IE really wants to use Classic Expander. There are a number of ways to fix this problem, but probably the easiest is to just insure that Expander 6 for X is running before you start any IE downloads.

Key Applications: OmniWeb

- **Customize the toolbar.** Just like the Finder, the OmniWeb toolbar is highly customizable. Drag the address bar around with the command key, and control-click in any open areas to bring down a customization menu.

- **Fix non-responsive menus.** Sometimes the OmniWeb menus will stop reacting to mouse actions. When this happens, clicking into the Finder and back again will usually fix the problem. You may have to clear the menu with the escape key first.

- **Control-click for added options.** There are a wealth of options available on a control-click (or right click with a two-button mouse). These include the **very useful** "Open in new window behind current window" and "Bookmark this page".

Key Applications: Apple's Mail.app

- **Don't overflow mac.com mail account!** If you get a lot of mac.com mail, and use Apple's mail.app, make sure you're transferring the messages out of the mac.com inbox. If you don't, the messages are still sitting on the server, and you'll eventually get an "over" message from Apple concerning your disk usage. You can create a rule to transfer new mac.com mail messages to another mailbox automatically, which will prevent the problem from occurring.

Conclusion

I hope you've found this document useful. If you have corrections, additions, thoughts, or other feedback, please don't hesitate to send them to me: robg@macosxhints.com .