

THE ACADEMY OF PLUMBING 12 – GETTING ORGANISED: NO TIME, TOULOUSE

You really didn't think the puns could get any worse, did you? Oh, they can, they can. Underneath this pile of paper I have an excellent book here somewhere called *Clear Your Desk!* by Declan Treacy (<http://tinyurl.com/2rm8nz>), the contents of which I have read, digested, and naturally failed to implement. In it, the author disparages the use of electronic diaries and recommends using paper diaries instead. It was written in 1991. Now then. How many Filofaxes have you ever lost? I lost two before I gave up with them. It's a digital truism that data doesn't exist until it lives in at least two places simultaneously. What are you going to do with your Filofax, then? Photocopy it daily? Get real. Times have changed, and in the last 16 years Apple has managed to think of, create and refine iCal, our main subject du mois.

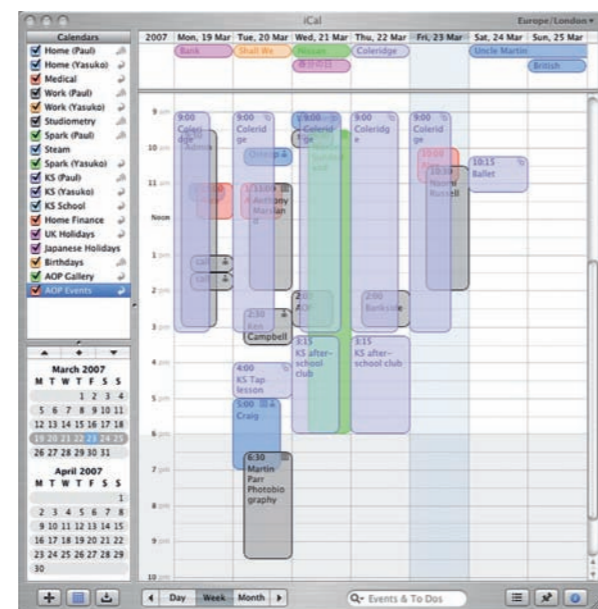
EVENTS, DEAR BOY. EVENTS

iCal is very much an Address Book for diaries in that, like the Apple Address Book, it is based on an open file format (the vCalendar format, very similar to the vCard format used by Address Book), which positively invites interaction with third-party applications. Open it and it looks rather anodyne with its two default 'Home' and 'Work' calendars in pretty gumdrop colours. Eh? iCal's main stroke of design genius is that it can display multiple calendars simultaneously in layers, and it's possible to turn the visibility of these layers on and off. Click on the Work calendar, select Week

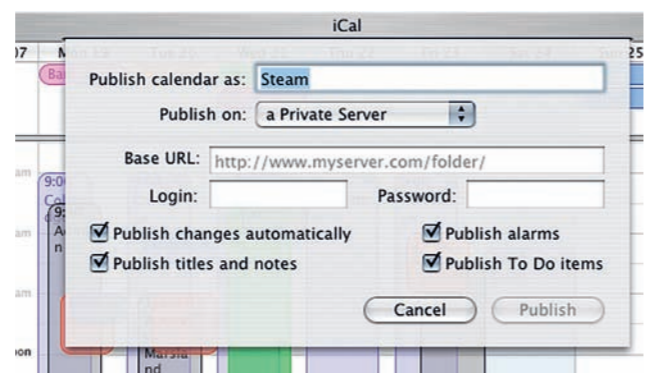
view and drag down a day's column. An event appears in that calendar. Now select the Home calendar and do the same thing. Two events are now visible, one in each calendar. Double-click in the white space under the Home and Work calendars and another calendar appears. Give it a name. Keep going until you've defined as many calendars as you need. Click on the checkbox next to a calendar to toggle its visibility on and off. This is another prime example of Apple's ability to invent the (in retrospect) blindingly obvious. Why had this never been thought of before? iCal doesn't stop there. It can remind you when events are coming up in a cornucopia of amusing ways including making boinging noises and sending you email. It can invite people to your events and ask them to RSVP. It can make events repeat, so that you need never forget an anniversary again. It has a To-Do list. It can print useful calendar layouts, including pages that fit into your Filofax.

Now the fun starts. Go to the Calendars menu and select Find Shared Calendars... Your Browser opens and goes to Apple's iCal Library page, from where you can choose to subscribe to all manner of public calendars, usefully including UK Holidays. Go right ahead. Presto, another calendar called UK Holidays appears in your list, containing, er, UK holidays. Given my proclivities I also find it useful to subscribe to Japanese Holidays. You carbon-guzzling globetrotting types can subscribe to more than 32 preset national and religious

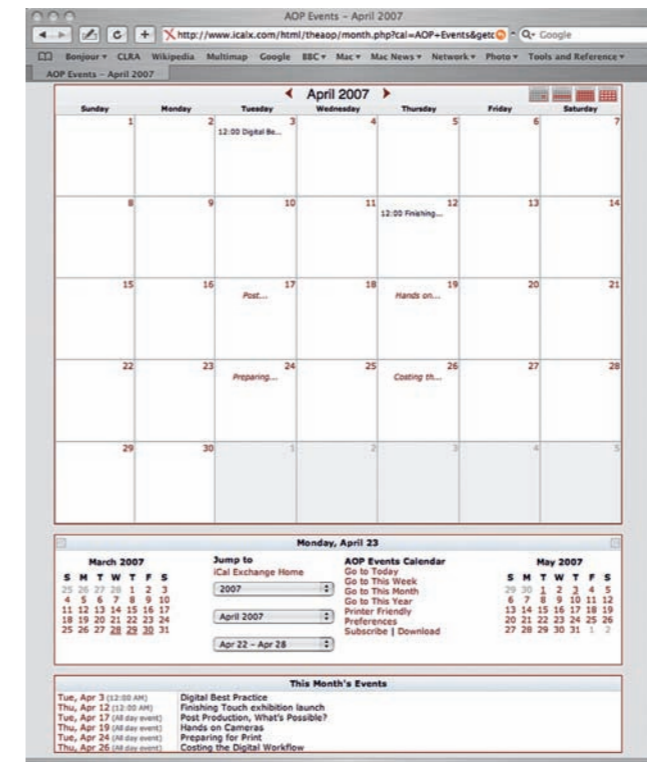
holiday calendars from here. Of course, as well as subscribing to existing calendars you can publish your own. Why would you want to do that? Think 'workgroup', or 'studio diary'. If you're the AOP you could think 'Gallery Calendar', or even 'AOP Digital Season Events' calendar, which fortunately we have. More later. I have a whole bunch of calendars including my home and work calendars, my wife's and our daughter's. We can all keep track of what's happening. Updates to published calendars happen in real time, meaning I can insert a new event in my Work calendar while offsite but online and my wife gets to see it immediately. This is how we organise our entire lives. Sad, isn't it?



What iCal can't do yet is create calendars that can be edited by more than one person: currently, iCal calendars can only be edited and published by the person who created them. This is set to change in Max OS X 10.5 Leopard, which is due "real soon now", as they say. iCal (and Address Book) really go Business Class in Leopard and support proper workgroup sharing of contacts and shared calendars. (<http://www.apple.com/macosx/leopard/ical.html>). Naturally, Apple would like you to use their >£60-per-annum .Mac service for your calendar sharing. .Mac has its plus points, what with email, password and Safari bookmark syncing, backup and online storage thrown in; and it is capable of keeping up to five Macs synchronised, which is good for a home or small studio operation. However, if you're a cheapskate like me you'll go looking for a free alternative and find it at <http://www.icalx.com>, the site I use to sync my calendars.



It's possible to publish Public calendars that anyone can freely subscribe to, and Private calendars that require a username and password to access. It's also possible to make your calendars simultaneously available in web browsers: they don't look as nice but they do work quite well and are definitely better than nothing.



CRUMBS!

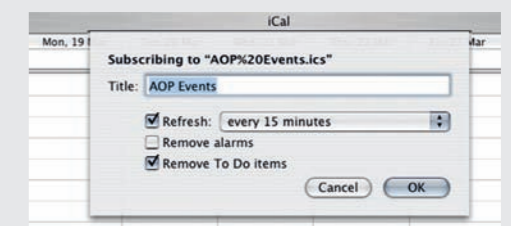
Yes, that's CRM: Customer Relations Management, the great Holy Grail of corporations seeking to keep staff numbers low and your telephone call in an automated answering system. Oh, sorry, I was completely wrong there! What was I thinking? I meant of course companies seeking to really care for their customers and suppliers, properly log and follow up on suggestions and leads, and generally keep everyone happier than they were in the paper age. Essentially, CRM appears to involve having a list of contacts, a schedule of when to contact them, a list of reasons why, and a means of recording and logging conversations with those contacts so that leads can be followed up, sales made and clients not lost because they were feeling neglected. In every OS X installation Apple provide the Iron Gates of CRM for free in the form of Address Book, iCal and Mail, but currently don't offer any way to easily integrate them into a proper CRM system. Step forward those third parties, standing on the shoulders of giants, or at least, open file formats. A versiontracker.com search for 'CRM' (<http://tinyurl.com/3yrmvg>) returns 19 different applications ranging from simple apps like CRM4Mac which do little more than tie the three Apple apps together, to fully-featured multi-user sales and project-management apps like MarketCircle's Daylite. A similar search for 'iCal' (<http://tinyurl.com/2w7wgb>) produces nearly 600 hits. There is something for most of us here.

So what's left? Well, many of us use custom FileMaker Pro databases for our contacts and invoicing. They often work well for what they do, but as with proprietary PIM applications they tend to exist in a world of their own. How can we make them talk to Address Book and iCal, so that we can use those whizzy extras like iAddressX, Snail Mail and others? Address Book Manipulator

AOP Digital Season

This April and May the AOP are running a season of talks, seminars and presentations at 81 Leonard St concerned with all things digital. Events planned so far include a Digital Careers Talk; MR Systems Open Day; Open Standards for Digital Workflow; Finishing Touch exhibition launch; Post Production, What's Possible?; Who Does the Separations?; Costing the Digital Workflow; and me blathering about The Compleat Digital Photographer and presenting a Macintosh Master Class. So roll up, subscribe to the AOP's Digital Season and Gallery Calendars and find out when these events are happening! (And get e-mail reminders of any last-minute changes or additions.) Here's how to do it.

iCal Go to the Calendars menu and select Subscribe. In the box that appears, type `webcal://ical.mac.com/aopevents/Events.ics` and click Subscribe. Set up the next box to look like this. You will then get a calendar including email reminders of all the events in the Season.



Windows Sadly, more than four years after iCal first appeared, Windows still lacks a calendaring application as simple, powerful and elegant as Apple's. The nearest is the free MonoCalendar (<http://www.monocalendar.com/>), although the hideous Mozilla Sunbird (<http://tinyurl.com/es8oc>) and EventSherpa (<http://tinyurl.com/ywhvor>) also subscribe to iCalendars.

Browsers Any web browser can access the AOP's Events calendar at <http://ical.mac.com/aopevents/Events>. This version lacks iCal's automated reminders and beautiful graphics but is far better than a slap in the belly with a wet fish.

All of this information, with clickable links, will be in the e-mail AOP Newsletter and on the AOP websites (<http://www.aopdigital.com>) and (<http://www.the-aop.org>). Go on, then: subscribe and never again miss a trick.

(<http://tinyurl.com/2t7c5d>) and myFMButler FileMaker to vCal XSLT 1.03 (<http://tinyurl.com/2mm8rj>) can be used by database developers and advanced users to establish communication between FileMaker, Address Book and iCal. Stuck with addresses and contacts in FileMaker, Word or even Excel? Export that stuff as a text file and use ABTransfer (<http://tinyurl.com/2wo5jz>) to get it into Address Book. What else is left? Regular client communications in the form of mail-outs and newsletters. There are several applications that can be used to create formatted bulk mailings, Serial Mailer (<http://www.falkonware.com/>) being one of them. However, watch you don't fall foul of the Spam Police if you do your own bulk emailing. Avoid this pitfall by getting yourself an account with <http://www.constantcontact.com>.

CRYSTAL BALLS

Of course, by the time you read this OS X 10.5 Leopard will probably already be on sale, with loads of dapper new surprise features that render most of what I've just written redundant. Who knows? It's due 'this Spring'. Leopard Server looks very interesting, too, with its onboard Calendar Server: just the thing for a small workgroup like the AOP office. Whatever happens I'll have taken a good look at Leopard, both master and servant, by next month and will have some photography-orientated comments to make on it. Oh, and this column will be one year old come the next issue. I'll have to stick a candle in a fairy cake.