

David Pogue's Mac OS X Leopard Edition

By Larry Mobbs

For more than 20 years I have been frustrated by instruction manuals that accompany the software that I've purchased. It has always been my impression that these manuals were written by computer programmers, who were not particularly aware of the levels of understanding the person who would end up reading their books. It always seemed to me that the programmer who authored the text assumed too much about the knowledge of the reader and would write text that was beyond the simple understanding of other readers seeing this software for the first time.

Anyone who's looked at the offerings in a substantial bookstore has seen shelves of instruction manuals that have been published to accommodate the shortcomings of the manuals included with the software. It may have been necessary for the programmer to be the writer in the age of early software manuals, but that should not be the case any longer. Secondly, the more common practice in today's software publications is to include the manuals on the CD and not provide the written text to the user at all. This attempt can be difficult for the user who is switching between screens showing the program and the other showing the instructions. David Pogue, a technology editor for the New York Times, has published a number of books for the person who is dedicated to learning the software that they purchased and wants a significant and detailed text to work out of. This publication, Mac OS 10 Leopard Edition is no exception. It is a 900+ page publication and steps through every aspect of the operating system.

There is no short way to a single text to cover all the aspects of any operating system, whether it be Microsoft Windows or the Mac OS X series. Secondly, a book like this is not read like a novel but is kept at the desktop for references. Books of this nature need quality indexes so a person can find a topic that they want quickly and jump to the page where the subject are interested in is located. Once finding the proper references in the block the next measure is how accurately and how simply can the writer provide the necessary information to the reader. David Pogue is an experienced writer as a news columnist and includes bits of humor throughout his text, which makes the reading lighter than most software manuals would dare try. He has written a true masterpiece for describing a very complex subject and, in the end making this tool Mac OS X, more usable for the owner.

As mentioned above, this is not a book that a person would read cover to cover, but that doesn't mean there isn't a lot to be gleaned from doing so. I had four months of experience with the Mac OS 10 Leopard edition when I sat down with Mr. Pogue's book. I had also used Mac's OS X Tiger edition for two years prior to that and felt I was well-versed on the subject. Naturally I wanted to look at the new additions to the Leopard edition and quickly went through those before going back to the beginning of the book. What I found when going back to page 1 was that there's a lot a little tricks Apple has implemented into the software that a person just using it day by day would never pick up. Particularly so are the keyboard shortcuts, and cute features that one would not expect to find. For example, the spotlight search window, where the users enter search information can also be used for calculator, and you can access the onboard dictionary provided with the operating system just by entering the word person wants to understand.

Mr. Pogue's writing style makes this an easy book to read. The subject matter makes it engrossing. The combination makes it a highly worthwhile text for anybody trying to learn the Leopard edition of Mac OS 10. The book is published by O'Reilly in conjunction with Pogue press. This text was made available to COMP for evaluation. COMP members can purchase it through O'Reilly at the 35% discount. The book can also be purchased at major bookstores such as Barnes and Noble for the retail price of \$34.95.