

Apple computer users a resourceful bunch

Evi Mariani
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There are only a handful of manufactured products in the world that have user groups as resourceful as the Macintosh user group. And with the growing Mac retail computer market in Indonesia, such user groups are also growing fast, with more than 20 members signing up a week on average.

There are three Indonesian Mac user groups (MUG) registered with the official Apple website www.apple.com. They are id-apple@googlegroups.com (more than 800 members), id-mac@yahoogroups.com (1800 members and still counting) and www.mac.web.id.

Most of the members live and work in big cities like Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, Yogyakarta and Denpasar.

Dispelling the myth that Mac computers are expensive and used only by professionals, user group members come from a range of backgrounds, including designers, economists, writers, IT consultants, web developers and students.

Some users have had Macs for more than 10 years and others have been members for just under a month.

In id-mac, whose e-mail traffic can reach an average of 2,000 e-mails a month (more than 60 e-mails per day), there are many "newbies" — those who only recently got a Mac or those who are thinking about getting one. Id-apple, with less e-mail traffic, also experiences the same thing.



Some id-mac members on a gathering day. The gathering is usually announced in the groups.

Consequently, there are many basic questions. But the community itself seems more than happy to help others.

"It's a place where people can help me with my Mac problems, as well as assisting others who experience difficulties. Helping your friends has an upside too — you tend to research more as you help and get more knowledge along the way," Yonatan Indrajaya, a student at Sekolah Pelita Harapan Bukit Sentul, told *The Jakarta Post* in his e-mail.

For technical questions, of

course, users can always rely on Google. But there are many things Google cannot answer. Yogyakarta Djaka Dwian-di, who has been using an iBook G4 since March, shared his experience with id-mac.

"I bought a firewire external hard disk casing. Apparently it couldn't be used for large-capacity hard disk. I asked id-mac, and some members who had experience with casing suggested a particular brand available at a particular store in Mangga Dua (West Jakarta). And it works well!"

Djaka said. Apparently, the community has more to offer than tips on prolonging your battery life or how to use a Mac application like Aperture or Keynote.

"The community shares workarounds and solutions to problems only found in Indonesia. I also learned where I could get my new MacBook Pro's dented case fixed 'diketok magic', another member, Ronald Ishak, said.

"Ketok Magic", which literally means "magic knock", is a term that generally refers

to a mechanic "magically" knocking out dents in cars.

Apple computers, particularly PowerBook and MacBook Pro, all of which have metal casings, can be chipped or dented if they are dropped.

Nevertheless, the questions most frequently raised are related to applications and troubleshooting.

If you develop an application you can also distribute it through the groups.

IT consultant Ricard Eliston, for example, whose hobby is tinkering with MACs, made a dashboard widget CinemaShow to access www.21cinemplex.com. The widget made it easier for moviegoers to open the website.

"I didn't register my widget with www.apple.com. This widget is for Indonesian users, so I only made an announcement on mailing lists like id-mac. I think that's enough. If the widget is deemed useful, I'm sure it will be distributed through word of mouth or postings," Eliston said.

The useful part is not just exchanging info through the cyberworld but also through gatherings, mostly in Jakarta and Bandung.

Through gatherings, members can exchange CDs containing free applications and updates, especially those whose Internet connection is slow or limited.

Sometimes there are mini gatherings, in which only five people meet at a cafe, talking about a specific problem or showing off new stuff or even disassembling a Mac notebook to plant a bluetooth device.



A mini-gathering in a cafe in South Jakarta. The purpose of the mini-gathering was to plant a bluetooth dongle inside the first-generation iBook G4, which didn't have built-in bluetooth. It was a courtesy operation.

Longtime Mac user Adinoto Abdul Kadir said MUG members were not necessarily Mac fanatics, although most of them were proud of their Macs and liked to take digs at Windows.

There are many Mac users who also use Windows. They reveal their "double life" without facing the risk of being rubbished (well, maybe a bit on a bad day).

Members can find out how to operate the dual-boot option so their Intel Mac computers can also run Windows applications like heavy-duty games.

Therefore, these motley groups of Mac users are reliable because they comprise individuals with different specializations who can answer the most specific of questions.

Although some of the members of course have a commer-

cial interests (some Apple resellers are in the groups), they rarely give misleading answers. If dubious advice is offered, another member will generally step in to explain.

However, Adinoto said there were many more Mac users in Indonesia who did not join the groups than did.

"Those who join are users who like to tinker with their computers," he said.

As one new member from Denpasar, Alexander Erwin Hermanto, said, "Whether there's a Mac community or not, I use Mac anyway. But it's really cool to have a supportive community like this."

On the Net:
<http://wiki.id-mac.org>
www.id-apple.com
www.mac.web.id
www.maclubindonesia.com
www.stevensmac.com

Ride the tiger, spot the leopard

Apple Computers Inc is always going on about the versatility of its signature product, the Mac, and how funky, fun and creative this box of tricks is.

But what makes the Mac special is more than just the slick design; what's in the box is also vital and this is where the OS or operating system comes in.

True to form, the newest Mac OS X, 10.5 Leopard, unveiled recently, looks the part in a cool spotty box. It is also certain to have one of the company's latest software innovations, iLife, bundled in with it, which is where things start getting really interesting. First, let's have fun with iLife 6 and talk about the Leopard later.

With a UNIX-based Mac OS X and iLife a mundane existence can become a creative one with an integrated system offering users a photo album, home videos, musical pieces and a blog.

The older Tiger version bundled in the 2006 MacBook and MacBookPro (10.4.6 with 10.4.7 updates available on the www.apple.com) also comes with this package of applications.

In addition to iLife, which consists of iPhoto, iMovie HD, iDVD, iWeb, there is also software called Garage Band, a MacBook series and ComicLife, a third-party applica-

tion with which you can make comics from your photos. For more info about ComicLife, go to www.PlusQ.com. Those who do not get the software bundled into their Intel Mac can buy the shareware application for US\$24.95.

This software package means you don't have to be a professional graphic designer, rocker or AVman to wow your friends with your creativity or at least make them laugh at your silly photo-comics or home videos.

If you are a busy person and don't have the time to get the hang of all these applications — and it is worth noting that Mac applications are known for their user-friendliness — iPhoto and ComicLife are the most recommended.

While not everyone can sing beautifully while playing the piano or direct box-office blockbusters on their home video systems, most people can master the point-and-click skills of a digital camera, which is rapidly becoming the imager of choice worldwide.

Perhaps iPhoto's best function is that it helps you order the multitudes of photos you are likely to take on your digi-cam. Nowadays, next-to-nothing processing costs mean people snap everything, and saving memory space is now more important than scrimping on those nearly obsolete

developing fees. Spending your weekend ogling at the screen and renaming your zillions of photos one by one using ACDSsee or Windows Explorer is a ticket to square-eyed oblivion.

However, with its drag-and-drop ease and Apple-designed templates, iPhoto means crick neck will be a thing of the past.

Simply import your pictures from your camera or from your Pictures folder in the iPhoto library.

Select the pictures you want in one album, and then click "New Album From Selection" and give the album a title, for example, My Corny Love Scenes. iPhoto will automatically group your pictures in one window.

From there you can use the slideshow feature, but what iPhoto can do with ease that other apps cannot is set your pictures to music and select a cool a transition style — a flip, cube, mosaic, fade to black and others. iPhoto 6 also provides templates for you to create calendars, greeting cards and books from your photos. You can also print them and show them to your non-digital-savvy relatives.

Enough with iPhoto. For the rest of the how-to, you can click through to www.apple.com that provides a tutorial. Or open iPhoto and tinker with yourself and take a look at the

easy-to-follow Help section. Then there is ComicLife.

Upon opening the app, ComicLife automatically activates your built-in camera (on MacBook series). The annoying thing is you cannot seem to turn off the camera (I have consulted the help section, to no avail. If you find out how to, please tell me).

ComicLife also automatically connects to your iPhoto library and your Finder.

You can make a simple comic page full of pictures and text in less than 15 minutes. All you have to do is just select a panel template (the standard version has dozens of templates), drag a picture you want to the panel and then resize, move or rotate the picture to fit nicely.

As you get more familiar with the app, you can make a comic page with three to 10 pictures in under 10 minutes.

When you're done with photos, you can move on to your video collection. To have fun with iMovie HD, you don't need an expensive MiniDV camera.

With many digital cameras and cell phones now able to record short videos it's time to become an editor-director with iMovie HD.

With this app you can put in a credit title introducing the "stars" — like yourself or your children. Five 3-minute .avi files can be combined into

one 15-minute video. iMovie provides you with various scene transition options too and you can also insert a soundtrack.

The final step is burning the video down to DVD along with the slideshow you have made with the iPhoto.

Using iDVD app, Mac users can create a DVD project by compiling slideshows and videos for burning on one disc. You can create a Hollywood-style DVD menu for your project as iDVD has provided you with some fancy themes. With the same drag-and-drop ease, just follow the simple instructions and you too can have a customized DVD menu.

Simply drop your movies from iMovie library and slideshows from iPhoto library and type in the titles for each. If you have Superdrives in computers like MacBookPro, you won't have any problem burning your project to DVD. But if you have MacBook 1.83Ghz with only a Combdribe, you can archive your project or build a disc image file (.dmg) in your hard disk.

Later, transfer the project or the .dmg file to a machine that has a DVD burner.

Before you burn it to a DVD, you'd better preview your project.

Play your project with the DVD Player on your com-



An example of a simple ComicLife product. A user only needs 10 minutes to create such a page.

puter while you are connected to your TV set. Once you're sure everything is OK, burn the project. With iDVD you can copy the project to multiple discs.

The rest: Just follow the instructions, click help if you

get confused or open the www.apple.com and click the iLife step-by-step tutorial if even help can't help you.

As for GarageBand and iWeb, see the tutorial on www.apple.com.

(Evi Mariani)

Stressed city workers try new way to unwind — singing

Jane Merriman
Reuters/London

Stressed bankers in London are being offered a new way to unwind — singing lessons.

Professionally trained singer Karin Hochapfel runs stress-busting classes for City highfliers that use a mixture of yoga, Alexander Technique and breathing exercises to relieve tension — all used by singers to warm up before they perform.

"I got the idea to construct the classes in a way so hardworking people can use it to energize themselves and get relaxed," she said.

Hochapfel has run classes in London's West End for the past year, but has just started in the bustling financial district of Canary Wharf, where she says people are noticeably uptight.

"These people are so stressed," she says. "I was trying to distribute postcards about my classes and normally I don't have difficulty getting in contact with people but it was so hard to get eye contact."

Hochapfel said she sensed peo-



Karin Hochapfel (right), a professionally trained singer, runs a stress-busting singing class for fraught bankers who work in Canary Wharf, an enclave of London's financial district.

ple's fear, which she put down to anxiety about doing well in their jobs. "It's the competition — you sense that."

Thousands of suit-clad workers

stream out of Canary Wharf underground station at rush hour on weekdays, hurrying to get to their high-rise offices where they put in long hours with few breaks

but plenty of stress.

Hochapfel says the physical and mental processes involved in singing help alleviate tension as the whole body has to relax.

"All your ligaments are connected to the voice, so the way you hold even your wrists can affect how your voice sounds."

Hochapfel, who trained in Cologne and New York, starts her class with breathing exercises. She asks people to imagine their bodies as a tube through which air flows.

"It's an ancient way to unleash energy and relax and tone the body and mind."

Then she gets the class to throw a ball to each other and the person holding the ball has to sing a phrase from a song.

At one session this produced: "The hills are alive with the sound of music," "Ave Maria," and "Sex and drugs and rock and roll."

"It's like melody dialog which can be very funny and because it's funny you forget about other things."

Stress is responsible for 12.8 million lost working days a year in Britain, translating into almost £4

billion (US\$7.61 billion) of lost revenue, according to Gabriella Goddard, an executive coach, who offers courses on how to deal with stress.

Goddard, who is currently working on an anti-stress program at U.S. investment bank Lehman Brothers, said the symptoms of stress — such as a faster heart-rate and increased blood supply to the brain — once had a more positive function.

"It was great when we had to fight bears."

But today people find it hard to de-stress and return the body to equilibrium, she said.

"We can forget how to switch off the on switch."

Her sessions at Lehman Brothers highlight stress-relieving strategies including exercise, as well as adopting a different perspective on the work environment.

"I get people to be silent for five minutes and just look out of the window. That helps to calm people down and get the heart in equilibrium."

Employers have become more aware of stress in terms of ill-health and also litigation. People

can claim work-related stress under UK employment legislation under health and safety rules or as a breach of contract.

Increasing numbers of companies in the United States are offering employees massage and yoga onsite, not only to de-stress people but to encourage them to stay at that company rather than move to another.

Some places have come up with less conventional ways of getting people to unwind.

A bar in China lets customers punch staff and smash glasses to unleash pent-up anger, while in the Philippines, residents flock to a restaurant in Gerona where they can smash plates against a "wall of fury".

Goddard says women are more pro-active than men in terms of wanting to tackle stress.

"Women want to know how to juggle their lives better."

Hochapfel, who performs jazz and cabaret in London, also finds women more receptive to her anti-stress remedies.

She says men do come to her classes. "But it's always less men than women — what a pity."