



BRMUG

Baton Rouge Macintosh User Group

News and Views

March 2004

BRMUG Information

Member Meetings

Regular meetings are held the third Thursday evening of each month at BlueBonnet Library at 6:30 P.M.

Planning Meetings

The Thursday after the regular member meeting the planning meeting is held at 6:15 at Calendars on Perkins near Essen.

About BRMUG

For more information call the User Group President, Isaac Traxler, 225-926-1552 or send e-mail to info@brmug.org or check our web page at <http://www.brmug.org/>

BRMUG Volunteers

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 Contact anyone above if you have suggestions for BRMUG.

After the Meeting

Join us at Brewbachers on Bluebonnet after the BRMUG meeting: fun, food, open format. Get to know each other.

Newsletter Articles

Please submit newsletter articles to newsletter@brmug.org. Articles are printed on a space available basis. Submissions are welcome!

The March meeting will be held at the **Bluebonnet Library** on **March 18th**, the 3rd Thursday of the month, at 6:30 P.M. This month's presentation will be an **Introduction to Illustrator** by Isaac Traxler. Adobe Illustrator is a modern drawing program with a wealth of features. But how do you get started and do basic things? That is the question I hope to answer at this meeting. Members and guests are welcome. After the meeting, we will have our normal Social Hour at Brewbachers. If you need help getting there (<http://www.brmug.org/about-brmug.html>).

Meeting Agenda

6:30 PM	Welcome, Apple News
6:35 PM	Feature Presentation
7:45 PM	Questions and Answers
8:30 PM	Meeting ends

Meeting is at Bluebonnet Library!

Visit <http://www.brmug.org/next-meeting.html> for more information.

February Meeting

The February Meeting was about iTunes, and the iTunes Music Store. Thanks to all who attended. I hope it was a good informative meeting. There were a number of excellent questions (that mostly got answered). I hope you learned a some things and enjoyed the meeting!

AAPL

The last 30 days have been real interesting. Apple stock was at about \$22 a share this time last month. It has peaked at over \$28 a share last week (reaching a Market Cap over \$10 billion). AAPL is still selling for over \$26 with good prospects. In this case, I guess no news was really good news (Apple had no major news items this last month, but the stock climbed steadily).

Mac OS X 10.3.3

Apple released another update to Panther this week. This release includes a slew of fixes and updates: better integration of networking in the GUI, improved network file access, improved printing, new disk utility, DVDPlayer, Image Capture, Mail, Safari, USB/FireWire/Bluetooth improvements and security fixes. Many also see this release as a necessary step

before new machines could be released (probably speedbumps -- which might happen when the current memory incentive ends at the end of the month). This update available via Software Update (reboot required).

iPod Mini Sales

iPod Minis have been selling faster than Apple can make them. For a product that many proclaimed as over-priced and under-powered, it sure is selling good. Maybe Apple had the market pegged afterall.

Pixar Updating

Remember the non-Mac rendering farm that Pixar bought a year ago? Its days are numbered. Pixar is buying a G5-based Xserve farm. Pixar and Apple have been busy porting their code from the Linux cluster to the Xserve.

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Drawing Programs

When the first Macintosh shipped, it included two graphics programs: MacPaint and MacDraw. MacDraw was a vector drawing program and MacPaint was a pixel editing program. Adobe Illustrator could be considered the great-great-...-great-grandchild of MacDraw. So to better understand Illustrator, we should look at its roots.

MacDraw was designed to allow the user to place objects on a canvas. These objects could be grouped together, rotated, scaled, etc. without loss of shape or precision. In other words, the objects were built of vectors (lines that go from one point to another). You could enlarge an object by clicking on a corner and dragging. This essentially just moved the endpoint(s) of the line(s).

Paint programs take lines (or anything else) and turn them into a sequence of dots (rasterizing). This category of graphic images are known as bitmap images. If you enlarge a bitmap image, you simply make the bits bigger. Each individual dot in a bitmap is called a picture element (abbreviated to pixel). Enlarging a bitmap image entails spreading pixels out and inserting new pixels between them. Most of the time this results in an image that does not look very attractive (looks blocky).

Vector graphics from drawing programs can be enlarged or reduced without loss of quality. This happens because the image is actually a series of commands to draw lines. Scaling is done by calculating new endpoints for the lines. You can see an immediate advantage for vector graphics. A single drawing can be used for a business card logo and scaled up for a billboard. This single feature has kept the vector graphic image going and flourishing.

Drawing programs do not seem natural at first. Working with bitmaps most closely resembles the process of painting a picture on a canvas. Once the pixels are colored, they stay that way until you paint over them. They do not move around. With a drawing program, the different objects can be moved, rotated and resized at will.

Perhaps an example of the difference between the two types might be useful. Do you remember city fonts vs. Postscript fonts? If you do, you remember that the city fonts almost always looked good on screen but looked blocky when printed. The postscript fonts looked al-

most as good on-screen as the city fonts, but looked much better when printed on laser printers, especially if you picked a large font size. The reason is simple. The original city fonts were all bitmap fonts. The Macintosh knew how to produce the characters of the city font as certain sizes only. The rest were approximated by stretching one of the bitmaps. A word at 12 point on screen (72 dpi resolution) would have been much smaller printed on a laser printer (300 dpi, roughly 1/4 as big). Apple adjusted for this by printing bitmap fonts on laser printers by using the font size that was f times bigger (48 point was used to print 12 point fonts on laser printers). This worked up to 18 point (because most fonts stopped at 72 definitions).

Postscript fonts are actually a series of mathematical rules describing how to draw various lines to produce each character. As the size changes, the rules remain the same (mostly). Postscript is actually a set of vector-based rules for drawing characters. Because of this, it prints characters that are pleasing to the eye at almost any size and almost any dpi.

Modern drawing programs go way beyond these basics. But before you reach the fancy stuff, you need to be able to do the basics. So let's start with Adobe Illustrator. Illustrator has not adopted the Microsoft Office approach of forcing you to decide what to open before you can get to the program. Instead Illustrator displays a splash screen as it loads, starts drawing various palettes and then leaves you to open a document or create a new one.

Creating a new document (drawing) requires making some choices. You must pick how big the document is going to be (seems odd considering that the drawing should be totally re-scalable to any size).

The next decision is Color Mode. Illustrator allows you to pick between CMYK and RGB. Sometimes the choice does not matter much. Other times it can be very critical. CMYK refers to Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, and Key (black). In this color model, all colors are described as a combination of these four colors. If the end product is to be printed in color on paper (plastic, ...) you should use CMYK. If you are planning to make an image for display on a computer (an icon, a graphic for a web pages, etc...) you should use RGB. You can convert between the two

if you need to. Your choice is not final. But, the conversion process may (will) alter the colors slightly. The change may not be enough for you to notice, but it might be.

With this new knowledge comes the responsibility of trying to make the right choice. Since you are just starting, it does not matter that much now. In the future, you will care when you become an accomplished Illustrator user and professional graphic artist. You will probably have learned which choice to make by then also.

Figure 1 (on the next page) is a screen capture of Illustrator's tool palette. This palette looks a little intimidating at first. This palette is your key to a lot of functionality. As with almost all powerful things, a little complexity hops on for the ride. So let's look at this tool palette some. In fact let's look at just a little of it. We don't need of all of it now and trying to learn a lot in a short time will just be confusing.

Step one is to get some basic ideas down. Illustrator uses palettes to hold tools that can be used to alter objects. An object is something that has been drawn. You can group objects together so that the group can be considered a single object (create a picture with several lines, group them, and then rotate them as a group). So the metaphor in Illustrator will be to select an object(s) and then apply a tool (or process or filter) to that object. Similar to selecting a file and then dragging it.

Notice that the tool palette is divided into sections. The main section has 12 rows and two columns. In particular, no-



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tice that the top icon in both columns looks almost identical. The Selection Tool is used to select objects. The Direct Selection Tool (in column 2) is used to select individual points within an object (advanced use). We will also skip the magic wand tool (for selecting objects by attributes). On the second row, second column is the Lasso Tool. This tool is used to select objects also. With this tool, you draw a line around the object(s) you wish to select (looks sort Of like lassoing the objects).

The next group of six tools are used to create things. The Pen Tool is used to create curves. Save it for the future. The Type Tool allows you to create boxes with text in them. You have tremendous control over the text. You can select font stuff (size, family, kerning, ...). You can also align a block of text to an arbitrary shape (like have the text follow a spiral). This is invaluable for creating logos. And because everything is an object you can scale it without worrying about how it will look.

The Line Segment Tool lets you create straight lines, arcs, spirals, rectangular grids and polar grids. You can click on the tool and hold and it will show you the other choices. Illustrator calls these flyout menus. Any tool with a triangle in the bottom right is actually a family of tools that can be chosen via the flyout menus. This family of tools will be your basic building blocks. You should play with these for a while until you are comfortable drawing these various shapes.

Next is the Rectangle Tool that can be used to make rectangles, rounded corner rectangles, circles, ellipses, polygons, stars, and bursts. Rectangles are obvious. Rounded corner rectangles are critical to the modern world. Rectangles with sharp corners just don't belong everywhere. The next symbol is for ellipses and it can make circles also. Polygons are actually regular, convex polygons with however many sides you specify. The star allows you to make stars with the specified number of points (a three point star is a triangle). As for the burst -- just do it!

The paintbrush is similar to the paintbrush in classic bitmap graphics programs. It draws freeform swishes. These swishes can be selected and dragged anywhere like any other object. They can be transformed, scaled, etc... Where the paintbrush produces continuous swishes, the Pencil Tool produces

Future Meeting Calendar

March 18, 2004 Adobe Illustrator Isaac TraxlerLibrary

April 15, 2004 TBA..... TBA.....Library

We need ideas for future meetings! Help us develop a plan to fill out 2004's schedule.

Send ideas to newsletter@brmug.org.

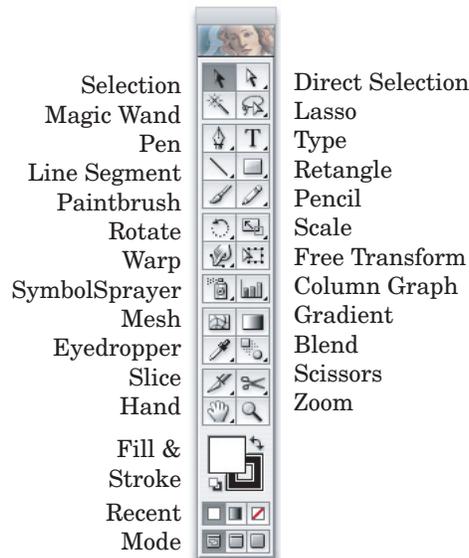


Figure 1, Illustrator Tool Palette

sequences of dots that are then merged into a line (curve, shape, whatever). It takes some practice to get used to these tools.

The next group of tools allows you to transform objects. First you select an object and then choose one of these tools. The rotate tools allows you to rotate an object. By default, a small crosshair looking thing appears in the center of the object. As you click and drag, the object rotates about this point in realtime. You can then click anywhere and see the crosshair move to where you clicked. Now when you click and drag, the object seems to revolve about this point. The flyout menu provides a Reflection and a Twist Tool. The Reflection Tool allows you to mirror image an object. When you first start trying reflection, it acts very similar to rotation. You need to choose either horizontal or vertical action to really see it do its stuff. The Twist Tool is amazing. You select an object, pick the Twist Tool and start dragging. The object will start warping. If you do it right, you actually create a ying-yang symbol. Amazing!

The Scale Tool does just what you expect. Select an object and then scale it. Simple enough. Via flyout, you can get to the Shear Tool. This is like a mixture

of the Scale Tool and the Rotate Tool. Try it and see. The third choice, the Reshape Tool can be downright destructive. Play carefully with this one.

And now we get to the weird stuff. The warp tool literally warps the selected object. No other way to put it. You have to do it to understand. But this is the mild one. The flyout menu provides the following variations of warp: Twirl, Pucker, Bloat, Scallop, Crystalize and Wrinkle. These are just unbelievable. No real way to describe them other than to list their names.

The last tool in the transform section is the Free Transform. This is yet another play toy. have fun.

Now we get to another section. The symbol sprayer starts off this flyout menu of symbol tools. Illustrator acquire the concept of symbols with version 10. Basically, a symbol is an object. Illustrator comes with some prebuilt symbols (like fish, trees, ...). These tools allow you to easily add symbols to your drawings. Spraying the fish symbol producing an entire school of fish. This is clearly a tool set that has real power for the advanced user.

The Column Tool is the first in a flyout menu of graphing routines from bar charts to pie charts.

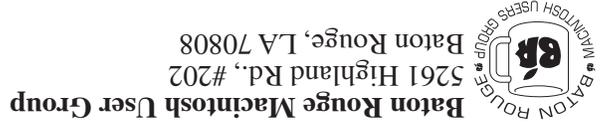
The Mesh Tool is another new tool to release 10. The Mesh Tool is used to apply a pattern to an object. The next three tools: Gradient, Blend, and Eyedropper are used to manipulate colors.

The Slice and Scissors Tools allow the lines within an object to be separated -- like cutting a line. This is useful to add another object in.

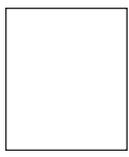
The Hand and Zoom Tools act like you would expect. The Hand Tool allows you to drag the canvas around. The Zoom Tool allows you to enlarge or shrink the canvas.

As you can see, Adobe Illustrator is a very powerful program. It can be used by a beginner for very simple things without a lot of muss. But it really demands practice and learning to really use it. Hope this gets you started.

by Isaac Traxler



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This Month:
 Introduction to Illustrator
 by Isaac Traxler

*Hiroshima 45
 Chernobyl 86
 Windows 95*

**THIS NEWSLETTER IS RECEIVED BY ALL
 BRMUG MEMBERS, CONTRIBUTORS, AND
 REPRESENTATIVES.**

The Baton Rouge Macintosh Users Group is a non-profit organization dedicated to Macintosh Users. Our mission is to help bring these users together in order to keep them informed of Apple Computer, Inc.'s trends, visions, and educate them on how to best use this most cost effective, easiest and friendliest of all platforms: **The Macintosh.**

If you are in the position of selling, supporting, or using the Apple Macintosh computer or any of Apple's products, we would like your participation and support for the benefit of our membership and your customer base.

Everyone is invited to attend the meetings. For a complimentary newsletter, or flyers to give out to others, or any information about the group contact the following BRMUG Ambassador: Isaac Traxler, President, (504) 926-1552, e-mail: president@brmug.org. We'll be most happy to talk to you about the Macintosh!

Send this form with \$15 (\$10 with copy of current school id for students) check payable to BRMUG to: BRMUG Treasurer, 5261 Highland Road, #202, Baton Rouge, LA 70808.

BRMUG Membership Form 3/2004

Name: _____

Address: Street, City, State, ZipCode

Home Phone: _____

Office Phone: _____

Things the club should do: _____

My interest areas: _____
