



BRMUG

Baton Rouge Macintosh User Group

News and Views

May 2005

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 May meeting will be held at the **Bluebonnet Library** on **May 19th**, the 3rd Thursday of the month, at 6:30 P.M. The meeting will be 6:30 PM at the Bluebonnet Library. This month we will do something a little different. I have had an Epson CX6400. I will bring the printer and demo it for part of the meeting. The rest of the meeting will be quick demos of various Software Gems. I am sure that a few will be surprises along with all the old standbys. 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>).

Here is the meeting schedule:

6:30 PM	Welcome and recent news
6:50 PM	Don's Distraction
7:00 PM	Epson CX6400 Presentation
7:30 PM	Software Gems
8:00 PM	Questions and answers

Meeting is at Bluebonnet Library!

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

April Meeting Review

In April I tried to convey the flavor of Apple's *Pages*. As half of *iWork*, *Pages* appears to be an important product for Apple. Rather a typical introduction, I tried to demonstrate where Apple is/was trying to go with *Pages* (I think). I hope y' all have better idea of where *Pages* fits into the broader software field and a little bit of a feel for using it.

AAPL

Last month's drop was discouraging. Apple's stock price has seen a modest decline this month. Correspondingly, the world has become full of projections of Apple's demise (a feeling of nostalgia I am not happy to have return). With predictions concerning the end of the iPod era to end of the Macintosh, Apple has been universally relegated to the position of a dead dinosaur that is so slow that it has not noticed its own death yet. I can remember when this was a daily norm instead of a news-worthy situation. I still believe that Apple's death is not imminent. Now might be a time to snap up a bargain. Of course the price is just as likely to go down a little more before another climb. I do expect another climb.

I do not think the horse is even tired. I believe the World Wide Developers Conference may hold some surprises. I expect the summer to be eventful. And the year following. Apple has changed. We no longer have 2 or 3 times a year when stuff happens. Things happen all year long. Sometimes the big things do not look so big at first glance.

Tiger Update Released

Tiger brought a few grumbles with it. Apple is already starting the process of addressing those complaints. Mac OS X 10.4.1 is available for download (I have not tried it yet)..

iTunes 4.8 Released, New Stores

Apple has released a new version of iTunes. Apple also opened new iTunes Music Stores in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. As before,

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iTunes continues to acquire new features (and loses a few small ones). iTunes 8.4 makes better use of Quicktime 7. It is also capable of downloading movies. So far this feature has been associated with a music download. Is this the beginning of something big -- or just the natural extension of music into music videos? MTV for your iPod? Only Steve knows, and he is not telling yet..

Epson CX6400

A little more than a year ago I replaced my aging Epson C42u printer. You might wonder why I replaced one Epson with another Epson. That in itself is a story worth telling.

I have been using a computer of some sort since 1976 (before there was an Apple II or a Radio Shack Model I). From the very beginning, I saw the need of printing (back then it was printing the graphs from my math homework). Over the last 29 years I have used a lot of printers for a lot of different purposes. My opinions on printers often changed based on my needs and the prices of the available options.

In my early printing days, color was irrelevant to me. Speed was a luxury. My original criteria were compatibility, price of printer, durability of printer, and cost of consumables. From the very beginning, I saw that I would always be changing computers and using multiple computers simultaneously. I started out looking for printers that worked easily with the computers I would likely have access to.

Price was also very important. Entry level printers used to be a lot more expensive than they are today. That meant that I bought a lot fewer printers -- so they needed to last longer. Clearly it was tough to balance low initial price against durability. I also learned very early on that the cost of paper and ink could quickly exceed the cost of the printer. In the "old" days, thermal printers were

much more common, a lot cheaper than other printers, and much quieter. Unfortunately, the cost of their special paper quickly exceeded the savings of the initial purchase price.

Back then, I usually wound up with a dot matrix printer, usually the model right above entry level. I typically find the entry level models compromise way too much on features and durability to reduce the price. When I started running PC labs, I learned a lot about durability and about the cost of consumables. I really liked the early Epson MX-80 dot matrix printers (other than the fact that they were incredibly slow -- even back then). When I first started running labs back at USM, the computers and printers were chosen by someone else. We had Okidata Microline 182s. These were nice printers. They had excellent tractor feeds and friction feed. The print quality and speed was excellent. The ribbon ink cartridges were very easy to replace. This turned out to be very important. The cartridge was very small and the entire ribbon was cycled in the process of printing less than one page. It did not take long before the majority of the ink was beaten out of the ribbons. Stretching the ribbon life turned out to be a real problem. Even though the print darkness was acceptable (barely), the reduced ink caused the printhead to wear out (the ink acted as a lubricant). Three printheads cost the same amount as two new printers. Even though the ribbon cartridges were inexpensive (\$3-\$5 each), using 10 a week per printer normally and 20-30 a week towards the end of the semester taught me a lot about initial purchase price versus long term cost.

These wonderful looking printers became an expensive lesson. While saddled with them, I kept looking at the solid product line from Epson. And then the world changed. The printer market exploded. Vendors started releasing new models every four to eight months. This was great! Printers got better, faster and had more features for a lower price constantly.

And then the ugly side came into view. Printing had shifted from printing characters (or a rough approximation via dots) to using fonts and needed specialized drivers. This made the job of supporting printers a much bigger hassle. And Epson ran into their first real competition. At that time, Epson was introducing new models every 2-4

months with complete line replacement at least twice a year. Each model was released with drivers. Unfortunately, Epson rarely released new drivers for models that were discontinued.

This began a very feast and famine period for Epson. They continued to produce excellent printers for very reasonable prices. Unfortunately, you knew the printer would be unusable with the next OS release. You also knew that if the original driver had a problem, it was unlikely to be resolved before the model was replaced. This reputation hung with Epson until a few years ago.

Many other vendors have come and gone. HP revolutionized laser printers and introduced the era of affordable laser printers. But they also fell victim to poor driver support. Lexmark makes some of the best printers on the market today from a price/performance/durability perspective. Lexmark has been one of the best vendors for providing good drivers initially and for longer term support of their printers. Lexmark's downfall has been the price of ink and their active battle to eliminate any third-party suppliers of ink/toner cartridges.

A few years ago I took another look at Epson. I knew they made good equipment and that they had some affordable models. I had been told that driver support was much better. I had been looking for a printer. A survey of the price of ink cartridges made Epson look very attractive. I wound up buying an entry-level Epson (CX-42u). This printer was not speedy, but it was cheap (about \$10-\$30 after rebate) -- cheaper than the ink for

Other Macintosh User Groups

SMUG

Shreveport Macintosh User Group
<http://mac.meetup.com/146/>

NOMUG

New Orleans Macintosh User Group
<http://www.nomug.org/>



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many printers. I figured that it was worth the money if it lasted through the first pair of ink cartridges.

It was much better than I had hoped. It would not die. And ink was very cheap. I found it difficult to buy a new printer while it continued to print without issue. But I desperately wanted a faster printer. I wound up handing it down to my daughter when we got our next family printer. After looking for a long time, I wound up with an Epson CX6400 for about \$50 after it was all over.

The Epson CX6400 is an all-in-one device. It includes a printer, a scanner, and memory card reader. It can be used as a personal copier without using a computer (I never seem to think about this option). It includes card reader slots for reading various memory cards from cameras. These slots are intended to support computerless picture printing. You insert a memory card, push a button and it produces a proof sheet with thumbnails of the pictures on the memory card. You check the boxes of the thumbnails you want and scan the proof sheet. It then prints pictures of the marked thumbnails. This sounds like a really neat feature. I really should try it some day. I did discover that my Mac can see the inserted cards and can read them. So, I have used my CX6400 as a very large and expensive USB card reader.

That is why I decided to try this printer when the price was low enough. I knew Epson understood engineering. Realizing that the card slots could be used as a card reader for your computer system was a real nice touch. When I consider that I have a scanner, a printer, a copy machine, a picture printer and a card reader in one footprint that needs only one cable to connect to my computer I get a lot happier. And the price of ink is low enough that I am slowly learning not to complain when someone actually prints with it.

The scanner is 1200x2400 DPI optical. This is not phenomenal. But it is very reasonable. It is more than adequate for normal scanning (remember, laser printers only printed at 300 DPI until recently). It is even adequate for scanning family pictures. It is not real fast, but it is acceptable. It is about what I would expect in the scanner component of an all-in-one.

Printing has been a surprise. Epson claims this printer prints from edge to edge of the paper (ever tried to convince your software to use 0 margins?). This is yet another feature I need to spend some time experimenting with. Printing speed was a real surprise. Even though it officially sold for \$150, it was usually discounted to between \$100 and \$120. I was expecting it to print four or five times faster than its predecessor (at least less than 30 real seconds a page). Epson claims 22 pages

2005 Meeting Calendar			
January 20	iPhoto Introduction	Isaac Traxler	Bluebonnet Library
February 17	Keynote 2	Don Ballard	Bluebonnet Library
March 17	Tiger Preview	Isaac Traxler	Bluebonnet Library
April 21	Pages	Isaac Traxler	Bluebonnet Library
May 19	Epson CX6400	TBA	Bluebonnet Library
June 16	Tiger	Isaac Traxler	Bluebonnet Library
July 21	Garage Band	TBA	Bluebonnet Library
August 18	iChat	TBA	Bluebonnet Library
September 15	iMovie	TBA	Bluebonnet Library
October 20	CompUSA Visit	Mike Luchsinger	CompUSA
November 17	Available	TBA	Bluebonnet Library
December 15	Holiday Gathering	N/A	Brewbachers
BRMUG's Meetings at a Glance Send ideas to newsletter@brmug.org .			

a minute in black and white and 11 pages a minute in color. I figured these speeds were for printing at really poor quality and would have little bearing on reality (kind of like mist mileage claims by car makers). I have never bothered to time the printer. It prints a page fairly quickly. I can actually watch the page gently slide out (such a change compared to the painfully slow emergence of the past).

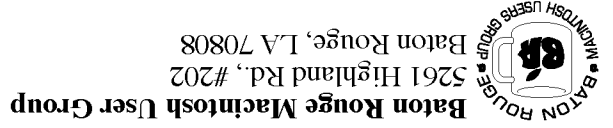
Not all is rosy. It does take the printer a while to get ready if it has not printed recently. The delay is not real long. But because the print speed is so much faster than I expected, it makes the initial delay seem like minutes (probably more like 30-45 seconds). Reminds me a lot of the initial delay printing to most older postscript printers. It is also kind of noisy during this startup while it brushes off the head and checks for full carriage movement. The actual printing is very quiet (all things are relative).

I guess I should get into offi-

cial specifications to make this a legitimate review. Epson claims 5760x1440 DPI resolution. I can say that it prints nicely. All things considered, this has turned out to be an excellent printer that looks like it will probably last as long as I choose to use it. The Epson CX6600 is very similar to this printer. It looks like very similar and prints color a little faster. It also lists for \$200. The Epson CX4600 is a lower end model that looks very different but has about the same features as my CX6400 (without the card readers).

I started this article talking about the criteria I used to use for selecting printers. Today I find durability to be less important (at least in the less expensive printers). I can usually find a reasonable price lately. It seems like someone is always having a rebate or a refurb sale. Driver quality, consumable costs and speed have become my new priorities (while always watching initial cost).

by Isaac Traxler



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Baton Rouge Macintosh User Group

*Hiroshima 45
Chernobyl 86
Windows 95*

This Month:
Epson All-In-One/Software Gems
by Isaac, Don, and Glenn

**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 5/2005

Name: _____

Address: Street, City, State, ZipCode

Home Phone: _____

Office Phone: _____

Things the club should do: _____

My interest areas: _____

