

The iMac Vaporware Gazette

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June 8: The Day Steve Jobs Returns?

Philip Elmer-Dewitt
 CNNMoney.com
 Mar. 6, 2009



The “end of June” is how long Steve Jobs said his medical leave would run when he announced in January that he was temporarily stepping down as Apple’s CEO. But David Zeiler, writing on another subject for the Baltimore Sun website offers a scenario in which Jobs could return to the helm a few weeks earlier — on June 8 to be precise.

Zeiler was trying to pinpoint the day Apple is going to release the final version of Mac OS X 10.6 Snow Leopard, the Macintosh operating system being developed to replace Leopard.

Jobs announced the existence of Snow Leopard at Apple’s World Wide Developers Conference (WWDC) on June 9, 2008 and said it would ship “about a year” later. Acting on the assumption that Apple will once again use the developers conference to announce the final ship date, Zeiler went on what he calls “a sleuthing mission” to find out when WWDC 2009 will be.

He called up the schedule of events for San Francisco’s Moscone Center — the traditional venue for WWDC — and found this:

05/27/09 - 05/28/09	Corporate Meeting	Moscone West
JUNE 2009		
06/01/09 - 06/05/09	Java One	Moscone North & South
06/06/09 - 06/12/09	Corporate Meeting	Moscone West
06/09/09 - 06/11/09	Women’s Business Enterprise National Council National Conference	Moscone North

Hmm. What do we have here? Moscone West is booked the entire second week of June — exactly one year after WWDC 2008 — for a “corporate meeting.” Who else but Apple would reserve that big a block of time and try to cover its tracks?

Zeiler makes two more assumptions: that Snow Leopard will be unveiled at the keynote address and that the WWDC keynote will be scheduled for Monday, as it usually is.

I’ll buy that. And I make one further assumption: that Steve Jobs, only a few weeks away from the end of his medical time-out, is not likely to leave the honor of introducing the 6th major update of Mac OS X — and any other big announcements Apple might have in store — to Tim Cook or Phil Schiller.

So if he’s made any kind of recovery at all, I expect to see Jobs that Monday, looking rested and relatively healthy, on Moscone West’s main auditorium stage at 9 a.m. sharp Pacific Daylight Time.

and a Prediction: Snow Leopard Release Date is June 8

This all started with two co-workers who sought my advice this past week on when to buy a new MacBook.

I thoughtfully advised them to wait until Snow Leopard came out so they would be sure to get all the promised speed benefits of the latest and greatest version of Mac OS X. Unfortunately, they both asked when that would happen. It’s widely expected that Apple will unveil Snow Leopard at this year’s Worldwide Developers Conference, but Apple has not yet announced the dates. At last year’s WWDC keynote, CEO Steve Jobs said Snow Leopard would ship in about a year. Since WWDC usually in held in June, I told my colleagues to wait until June — and then crossed my fingers events would validate my recommendation. But with the issue now brought to my attention, I wanted to know myself when exactly to expect Snow Leopard. I went on a sleuthing mission and discovered enough clues that I’m now willing to predict June 8 as the Snow Leopard launch day.

Here’s how I reached this conclusion:

First of all, I’m assuming Snow Leopard’s release will coincide with WWDC. The event’s dates are not set in stone (some years back it was held regularly in May and in 2006 was pushed back to August), although it usually falls in the second week of June. An item on MacDailyNews

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This Week... General Meeting with mini-presentation by Ken Vann on Internet Radio **Next Week...** iPhoto '09 feature presentation with Lynn McApline and Ray Kallman

First Impressions of Kindle on iPhone

by Walter S. Mossberg
Posted on March 3, 2009
at 11:02 PM PT



As I predicted in my review of Amazon.com's Kindle 2 e-book reader last week, the giant bookseller has moved quickly to make the 240,000 book Kindle catalog available on other devices. On Tuesday night, the first Kindle software reader appeared, and it's a free iPhone app. Called Kindle for iPhone, the app replicates the basic book-reading functions of the hardware Kindle device, and can be thought of as a complement to that device, which has more features. However, you don't have to own a hardware Kindle to use this app. You can now choose instead to use your iPhone or iPod Touch as the reader for books from Kindle's catalog.



I tried the new iPhone Kindle app moments after it became available on Apple's App Store (AAPL), and my first impression is generally positive. But first, let me note the key features of the hardware Kindle that aren't carried over to the iPhone app. It doesn't support periodicals. It doesn't read books aloud. It doesn't allow you to enter notes or highlight text, look up words in a dictionary, or perform searches.

And, if you wish to purchase a new e-book, the Kindle app sends you over to the iPhone's Safari Web browser to go the Amazon (AMZN) Web site; it lacks a built-in Kindle store.

However, it is a solid basic app for reading books, and is especially valuable if you already own a hardware Kindle, as I do. In my brief tests, the iPhone app synchronized rapidly and perfectly with

my purchased library of Kindle books on Amazon's servers, and allowed me to retrieve a previously purchased e-book, without paying again, just as my hardware Kindle does. It also synchronized to the furthest page I had read in that book on my Kindle. After reading for awhile on the iPhone, I performed that process in reverse, and my Kindle took me to the same spot where I had quit reading on the iPhone.

This means that, if I were in line at the grocery store with my iPhone, I could read a few pages of my book, and then, when I picked up my Kindle at home, I could continue reading, starting from the same spot.

I also was able to buy a new book using the iPhone's Web browser, and Amazon gave me a choice of auto-delivering it to either my Kindle or my iPhone, which it treats as just another Kindle. I did so, and it appeared very quickly. I later downloaded it as well to my Kindle.

Reading on the device was easy. You turn pages using the iPhone's horizontal swiping gesture, and you can change the font size on the fly, and create bookmarks, which then can be synced back to a Kindle device. You can view any notes you made on a hardware Kindle. And there's a slider to quickly go back and forth through chunks of the book.

The only flaw I encountered in my brief testing: if you turn pages too fast you get a fleeting blank page or two.

In two key respects, using the iPhone app seems superior to using a Kindle. First, the iPhone's screen is brighter, and supports color, so book covers and illustrations in my test books looked much better on the iPhone than they did on the Kindle. Second, the iPhone is smaller and thus much more portable.

The new Kindle app isn't as full-featured as some other e-reader apps for the iPhone, which do allow annotation, searching, and so forth. But it gets the job done and it gives you access to Amazon's

large catalog, which contains more popular and current commercial titles than other e-book sellers offer.

If you're an iPhone or iPod Touch owner who has yearned for a Kindle but balked at its \$359 price, or a Kindle owner with an iPhone or Touch already, this new Kindle app is a good bet, even if it is bare-bones.

New Safari Browser Succeeds at Speed, Flops on Features

Walter S. Mossberg
March 4, 2009

Apple's Safari browser has always been speedy and has introduced its share of



innovations. While it is mostly used on Apple's own Macintosh computers, with which it is bundled, Safari also comes in a Windows version and it is the browser on the iPhone as well.

Last week, Apple (AAPL) released a new version 4 of Safari, for Mac and Windows, that it claims is the world's fastest browser, and that has a number of new graphical features Apple says will make it easier to navigate the Web. Safari 4 is labeled as a beta, and both the Windows and Mac versions are free downloads at apple.com/safari

I've been testing the new Safari on both operating systems, comparing it with Microsoft's (MSFT) Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox and Google Chrome. My verdict is that Safari 4 really is significantly faster than its rivals, but that its user-interface changes are a big disappointment. They either add relatively minor eye candy, are catch-ups to features introduced by rivals, or actually make the browser harder to use.

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First, let's talk about speed. I tested Safari 4 on multiple Macs, and on multiple Windows PCs running Vista and XP. I did these tests on three different networks — a fast fiber-optic service, a typical hotel Internet connection, and a relatively slow cellphone data card.

On each type of connection, I timed the loading of a variety of common Web sites, like Facebook, The Wall Street Journal, the New York Times and Major League Baseball, both individually and in folders that opened multiple sites simultaneously in tabs.

The results were striking. In nearly every case, Safari 4 was much faster than any of the other browsers. In many of my tests, it required only a third or a half of the time to load a given page, or a group of sites, as the other browsers did, even though all were running on the same computer and the same Internet connection.

I was especially interested to see that Safari 4 for Windows blew away Google's

(GOOG) Chrome in my tests, even though both browsers share some open-source technology managed by Apple but licensed to others.

In some cases, where the new Safari's speed advantage was just a few seconds, that quickness may seem unimportant. But, when opening a large number of pages in tabs, it really makes a difference. For instance, on my fastest test network, Safari 4 for Windows fully opened a folder of 21 news sites in 43 seconds, while it took the new IE 8 over two minutes to perform the same task.

I wish I could be more enthusiastic about the other changes in Safari, but I can't. Apple's worst decision was to move the tabs that represent open pages to the very top edge of the browser screen, above all the toolbars and menus, instead of below the toolbars and menus, where they have traditionally resided.

This move was copied from Chrome, and Apple says it makes the tabs easier to discover. But I disagree strongly. Apple's implementation, in my opinion, makes the tabs harder to see and use on a crowded computer screen and separates the tabs too much from the content in the pages they represent. This is a particular problem in Vista, whose translucent window title bars can make the tabs almost impossible to read.

In another unfortunate choice, Safari 4 has done away with the progress bar that shows how much of a page has loaded. The company says it did this because Web pages are now so complex that the bar was no longer fully accurate. But I believe users like to see where they are in the page-loading process, even if it's only a rough approximation.

I am not alone in this sentiment. Already, Apple-oriented Web sites which normally defend the company's every move are publishing instructions on how to hack Safari 4 to restore the old tab system and the progress bar.

The new graphical features are just OK. Now, when you open a new tab, without specifying a Web address, Safari fills the formerly empty space with a gorgeous graphical representation of your most-visited Web sites. You can simply click on any of these to go right to that page. It even indicates when a page has changed since you last viewed it.

This is nice, but it copies a feature

already in Chrome, and I believe most people won't see it much, since they usually know in advance which site they want to view in a new tab.

Apple has also adopted "cover flow," iTunes' visual method for navigating albums, for the bookmark organizer in Safari. It shows a preview of each page in your bookmark list. Again, this is fine, but not a big deal.

Safari 4 also catches up to its rivals by offering suggestions of what you are looking for when you type in a Web address or search term. This worked well, but not any better than it does in other browsers.

Finally, the Windows version of Safari now looks and works much more like a standard Windows program than a Mac program. It has traditional Windows-style buttons and behaviors, which Safari lacked before.

Overall, Safari 4 is a mixed bag. The speed is great, but the design changes range from mildly interesting to downright annoying.

Intuit to Bring Online Payroll to Mac Users

intuit.

by Peter Cohen, Macworld.com

Intuit has announced plans to offer its Online Payroll service to Mac users of QuickBooks, enabling small business owners using Macs to manage their payrolls without having to rely on outside software. It plans to release the service in fall, 2009.

Combining Online Payroll with QuickBooks, Mac users will be able to pay employees, calculate earnings, payroll taxes and deductions, print paychecks and use direct deposit.

The service calculates federal and state payroll taxes; small businesses can write a check or pay federal and state taxes electronically as well.

Intuit Online Payroll is free for the first six months and costs \$9.95 per month thereafter for new users.

FireWire Target Disk Mode to the Rescue

MacWorld MacUser
Posted on Mar 5, 2009 11:49 am by
Scott McNulty

FireWire Target Disk Mode has saved my bacon countless times. If you're not familiar with FireWire target disk mode it transforms a Mac equipped with a FireWire port (either 400 or 800) into an external hard drive. Simply hold down the T key when you boot up and the Mac in question, as long as it supports this mode, will boot into FireWire target disk mode. Connect it to another Mac with a FireWire cable and the disk mounts in the Finder like any other external disk would.



Whenever I replace the boot disk of a Mac my routine is to restart the Mac in target disk mode, connect it to another Mac, and use SuperDuper to clone the drive to yet another external drive connected to the second Mac. I then swap out the old drive, slap in the new one, and reverse the cloning (that sounds far more awesome than it actually is, but you get the idea).

This is probably all old news to most of you out there, but earlier this week I was confronted with a problem that a nifty trick of FireWire target disk mode solved. My fiancée's sister is in town, and she has her MacBook with her. Tuesday evening she turned to me and said, "Can you reinstall iChat for me? I deleted it when I was running low on disk space." During her last visit I had replaced her hard drive with a larger one using the method I describe above, though at the time she neglected to mention her mad app deleting spree.

I thought this would be a pretty easy problem to fix since I have a Leopard DVD in my desk. Just pop it into the MacBook's DVD drive, reinstall iChat, and problem solved. That's when she told me about her MacBook's busted DVD drive.

What to do, what to do?

I vaguely remembered that not only are the internal hard drives treated as external devices when you boot a Mac in FireWire target disk mode, but so are any other drives that Mac might have. Oddly enough, I had another MacBook on hand with a functioning DVD drive and a FW400 cable to connect the two. I booted the extra MacBook into FireWire target disk mode and connected it to the iChat-less MacBook. Its disk showed up in the Finder. Hurrah! I then slipped the Leopard DVD into the DVD drive. It took a couple of seconds, but like magic the Leopard DVD appeared on the ailing MacBook's Desktop.

FireWire target disk mode had, once again, turned this lowly blogger into a hero. Is there anything FireWire can't do?

Snow Leopard Release Date is June 8

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the other day suggested WWDC might be held May 27-May 28 based on an item listed on the Moscone Center schedule posted online. The generic description says simply "Corporate meeting," but is listed as taking place in Moscone West, the wing of the complex where WWDC takes place every year.

But that's almost certainly not when WWDC will happen, not just because it's a bit too early, but because WWDC always runs over five or six days.

However, as I looked at the schedule, I noticed another generic "Corporate meeting" scheduled for Moscone West -- for June 6-June 12. That's the second week of June, the correct number of days, and ends on a Friday (WWDC nearly always ends on a Friday).

Yes, June 6 is a Saturday, but last year a similar generic listing on the Moscone Web site had the event starting on Sunday June 8 when the official start date was actually June 9. That means WWDC's official start date this year probably will be June 7, a Sunday -- unusual but not unprecedented. Back in 2005 WWDC's official first day was a Sunday.

I deduced that we'd see Snow Leopard on June 8 because the keynote typically is delivered on a Monday, and that's the moment at WWDC when Apple would

announce a new operating system. Still, though tantalizing, all that information needed something more to corroborate it. So I turned to Amazon.com.

By doing a search for "Snow Leopard Mac OS X" I discovered numerous Snow Leopard-specific books available for pre-order, all scheduled for release from mid-June through July. The earliest, "Learn Mac OS X Snow Leopard," is scheduled for June 15, just one week after my predicted date. Why is this significant? Well, when Apple released Leopard on October 26, 2007, the first Leopard book to appear (again, searching on Amazon) was "Mac OS X Leopard for Dummies" on Oct. 31, less than a week later. It was followed by at least a half dozen other books on Leopard released throughout November.

Obviously it's no accident the publishers timed their books to arrive immediately after the operating system. And remember, Leopard had been delayed from a June release that year. The publishers definitely are in the loop.

On the other hand, last November Engadget had post describing a leaked presentation slide by Jordan Hubbard, Director of Apple's Unix Technology Group, showing Snow Leopard as appearing in Q1 2009. That means we'd see it by the end of this month. If so, I'd happily be wrong. I can't wait to load Snow Leopard on my Mac Pro!



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