
Subject: Re: Mac Cursor

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Sat, 04 Nov 2006 15:58:08 GMT

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Jeff Hester writes:

> In the world I live in -- Astronomy -- there is currently a dramatic
> move away from PCs and Linux boxes to the Mac platform. I'm sure that
> is the case more broadly as well. A compilation of Mac-related
> questions/answers/discussion would probably be well-read. I'm not the
> right person to maintain the list, but if I knew someone was keeping
> track, I'd certainly contribute anything that I ran across.

Having spent five weeks in Hawaii last year in the company of astronomers, I witnessed this dramatic enthusiasm for Macs, and also noted the almost universal inverse correlation of this enthusiasm with UNIX knowledge.

I think we can attribute much of this to the brilliant Mac/PC advertisements we see on TV. I can't say why astronomers are especially susceptible to this kind of advertising, but it would be an interesting thesis topic for someone. I would put Paul van Delst's name forward as someone who can provide insight into why a researcher loves a machine that crashes 10 times a day. I will say, however, that the spinning desktop thing is WAY cool. :-)

All this just to say that I think MOST of what astronomers need to know about Macs can probably be found in a good UNIX book. I highly recommend UNIX by Deborah S. Ray and Eric J. Ray. This is one of the excellent Visual Quickstart Guide books, which I have always found to be THE most helpful in learning a new technical subject. They are pitched a step above UNIX for Dummies, and a step below UNIX in a Nutshell, and so perfect for much of what I've wanted to know about UNIX.

I try to keep abreast of the Mac problems IDL programmers run into, but not having a Mac myself (although my wife's computer IS making strange noises these days, so who knows) it is difficult for me to write from a particularly knowledgeable point of view. Dr. Bowman seems the logical one to me to take this job on, but I presume he has a real job, too. :-)

Cheers,

David

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Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: <http://www.dfanning.com/>

Sepore ma de ni thui. ("Perhaps thou speakest truth.")
