Take Control of Your Paperless Office

Joe Kissell

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Copyright and Fine Print

Featured Titles

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Welcome to *Take Control of Your Paperless Office*, version 1.1, published in July 2011 by TidBITS Publishing Inc. This book was written by Joe Kissell and edited by Tonya Engst.

This book guides you in the process of eliminating paper clutter, replacing many printed documents with digital versions—with special emphasis on the Mac-compatible hardware, software, and process needed to efficiently scan documents and create searchable PDFs. It also helps you find clever ways to reduce both incoming and outgoing office paper, and capture documents even when no scanner is available.

If you have an ebook version of this title, please note that if you want to share it with a friend, we ask that you do so as you would a physical book: “lend” it for a quick look, but ask your friend to buy a new copy to read it more carefully or to keep it for reference. Discounted classroom and Mac user group copies are also available. Copyright © 2011, Joe Kissell. All rights reserved.

**Updates and More**

You can access extras related to this book on the Web (use the link in *Ebook Extras*, near the end; it’s available only to purchasers). On the ebook’s Take Control Extras page, you can:

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- Read postings to the ebook’s blog. These may include new tips or information, as well as links to author interviews. At the top of the blog, you can also see any update plans for the ebook.

- Get a discount when you order a print copy of the ebook.
Basics

Here are a few “rules of the road” that will help you read this book:

• **Menus:** Where I describe choosing a command from a menu in the menu bar, I use an abbreviated description. For example, the abbreviated description for the menu command that creates a new folder in the Finder is “File > New Folder.”

• **Contextual menus:** *Contextual* menus appear when you Control-click various elements on a Macintosh screen, including Dock items and files in Finder windows. To describe opening a contextual menu, I tell you to right-click (Control-click) an item on the screen. Control-clicking always works, but if your mouse offers a right-click option, or if you use a trackpad or other means of opening a contextual menu, you should feel free to use the method you prefer.

• **Finding System Preferences:** I sometimes refer to settings in System Preferences that you may want to adjust. To open System Preferences, click its icon in the Dock or choose Apple  > System Preferences. When the System Preferences window opens, click the icon of the pane whose settings you want to adjust. I refer to these panes using a brief notation such as “the Dock preference pane.”

• **Finding an application’s preferences:** I often refer to preferences in an application that you may want to adjust. Don’t confuse an application’s preferences with the system-wide settings found in System Preferences. To access an application’s preferences, choose *Application Name* > Preferences. For example, in Microsoft Word, you would choose Microsoft Word > Preferences.

• **Path syntax:** This book occasionally uses a *path* to show the location of a file or folder in your file system. For example, Mac OS X stores most utilities, such as Terminal, in the Utilities folder. The path to Terminal is: `/Applications/Utilities/Terminal`

The slash at the start of the path tells you to begin at the top level of the disk. Some paths begin with `~` (tilde), which is a shortcut for the current user’s home directory. For example, if the person currently logged in has the user name *joe* and wants to install fonts that only he can access, he would put them in `~/Library/Fonts`, which is just another way of writing `/Users/joe/Library/Fonts`.

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• **Desktop vs. mobile:** For the purpose of this book, a *desktop computer* is either a laptop (most of which sit on desks) or a conventional computer running an operating system such as Mac OS X or Windows. A *mobile device* is a handheld computer-like device, such as an iPhone, iPad, Kindle, or BlackBerry.

A mobile device uses a *mobile operating system*, such as iPhone OS 3 or iOS 4. *Mobile software* is designed for mobile devices. For example, the version of Safari that runs on the iPad is the mobile version of Apple’s *desktop* Safari Web browser, and it is more technically called *Mobile Safari*. I try to avoid these terms in this book because they can be confusing for beginning readers, but you will find them in other writing and even in other Take Control ebooks.

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**What’s New in Version 1.1**

In the roughly eight months since the initial version of this ebook was published, a number of significant developments have occurred—new OCR and scanning products have been released, Apple has unleashed Mac OS X 10.7 Lion, and readers have written in with suggestions and corrections. This version brings the book up to date and corrects some oversights, but keeps all the basics intact. We plan to release a more substantial revision of the book at some point in the coming months.

The major changes in version 1.1 are these:

• Included information on the new Thunderbolt interface; see Disk Capacity

• Added information on several iVina BulletScan scanners and the new Fujitsu ScanSnap S1100; see Pick a Mac-Compatible Scanner

• Made several additions and clarifications to the list of OCR software (see Pick a Mac OCR Package), including a new sidebar on OCR in the Cloud

• Added two more document manager options; see Use a Document Manager

• Overhauled the information on automating OCR with Acrobat Pro to work with Acrobat X Pro; see Acrobat Scripts
• Added several new iOS apps that offer OCR; see Pick an iOS OCR App

• Explained how to use the new version of Preview in Mac OS X 10.7 Lion to digitally sign a PDF; see Add a Signature with Preview in Lion

• Included a new sidebar about desktop, iOS, and Web apps that let you sign a PDF with your fingertip, mouse, or trackpad; see Sign without Scanning

• Noted that Lion no longer supports the Apple USB Modem for sending and receiving faxes; see Use a Modem for Incoming Faxes
Introduction

My feelings about paper might best be described as ambivalent. As I write these words, I’m sitting in a library surrounded by books of the old-fashioned paper kind. I’ve written several such books myself, and I’ve often formed opinions about people based on how many books (and which ones) are in their homes. Had paper never been invented, I imagine many other aspects of modern life as we know it would never have developed. Paper facilitated the recording of history, the dissemination of knowledge, the spread of literacy, and a great many other virtuous things that I’m grateful for.

On the other hand, I’ve also written a couple dozen ebooks like the one you’re now reading, and have shifted most of my professional and recreational reading to books in digital formats—an activity made considerably more enjoyable by my iPad and iPhone 4 (especially with the latter’s Retina display). I like the fact that I can search, annotate, and back up my books now, and that I can accumulate as many as I want without running out of shelf space, as often occurs in my home.

But I truly lose all tolerance for paper when it comes to office paperwork—letters, forms, invoices, bank statements, receipts, business cards, flyers, note cards, catalogs, handouts from meetings and trade shows, photocopies of library book pages, and anything else that might end up on my desk in printed form. I used to have several filing cabinets full of the stuff, and overflowing—and yet, despite what I thought was an intelligent filing system, it frequently took me a long time to find what I was looking for. And because every day more of it would appear (some of it coming from my own printer), it was difficult to keep on top of it. The clutter became unmanageable, and I found that I spent far too much of my time managing paper rather than accomplishing useful tasks.

Never is the scourge of paper clutter more apparent than when I move, which I tend to do every few years or so. I get tired just looking at all those paper files, and I find myself cursing all those paper books that I love to surround myself with, because they’re so heavy and bulky. But most of my struggle with paper, I’m happy to say, is in the past. For a few years now I’ve been moving toward a paperless office. I now receive, and generate, only a tiny fraction of the paper I once did.
And virtually every paper document that comes into my life is scanned, converted to a searchable format, and digitally archived—so I can find nearly any document I need with a few keystrokes. And, because everything is backed up, I don’t worry about my papers being wiped out by a fire or other catastrophe.

In this ebook, I explain how you can do what I do when it comes to paper. By carefully examining where and how you use paper and looking for suitable digital alternatives, you’ll find that your productivity and happiness increase, while clutter and stress decrease. You might even save some money and benefit the environment.

What I describe here is a multi-pronged approach to strategically eliminating paper. Of course, even if you avoid generating your own paper clutter and reduce the paper other people send you, some paper will still find its way to you—and you may have many thousands of pages already sitting around. So one of the central features of the plan I discuss is scanning your paper documents and processing them in a way that retains their physical appearance while also letting you index, search, select, and copy their text. I also talk about using devices such as the iPad, iPhone, and Kindle (as well as smartphones and digital cameras) to maximum advantage—and doing clever things you may never have thought of, like paperless postal mail and fax.

Let me be clear, though: I’m not going to tell you to get rid of all your paper, or that resorting to paper for any reason is somehow a moral failure. Paper has many noble uses, and I wouldn’t pretend otherwise. You may choose to adopt all my recommendations, or only a few—everyone’s different, so by all means, do only what works for you.

The plan I cover in this book is appropriate for a home office or small business. If you aspire to take a large corporation paperless, I applaud you—but that sort of project is beyond the scope of this ebook.

Finally, I assume that you have at least one Mac at your disposal. While everything I discuss can be accomplished in a comparable fashion with other operating systems, in this ebook I focus on Mac-compatible hardware and software.


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Paperless Office
Quick Start

This book shows you how to reduce the use of paper in your home or office and use digital representations of documents instead (or in addition). You can learn about these topics in any order, but most of the chapters follow a logical progression, so I encourage you to read linearly. In any case, I urge you to start with Meet Your New Paperless Office, which provides useful background information.

Take preliminary steps:
• Learn about the goal and the steps you’ll take to reach it; see Meet Your New Paperless Office.
• Stop the flood: Head Off Most Paper Before It Reaches You.

Digitize and dispose of most incoming paper:
• Decide on the most important tool for creating a paperless office; read Choose a Document Scanner.
• Learn what features you need in Mac software to accompany your scanner in Choose OCR Software.
• Configure Your Software for optimal efficiency and quality.
• Figure out the most convenient way to process papers you receive in Create a Workflow for Incoming Paper.
• Devise a plan to scan all those paper documents already in your files; read Work Through a Backlog.
• Capture digital copies of documents even when you’re away from your scanner; see OCR on the Go.

Reduce the amount of paper you generate yourself:
• Learn how to break the printing habit painlessly (at least sometimes) in Avoid Common Printing Needs.
• Discover digital signatures; see Sign Documents without Paper.
• Say goodbye to your fax machine and hello to another 300 square inches of desk space; see Fax without Paper.

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Meet Your New Paperless Office

The idea of a paperless office may sound enticing, or even inspiring. It may also sound intimidating. If you make the transition to a paperless lifestyle, what will you have to give up—and what will you get in return? In this chapter I look at the advantages of a paperless office (ranging from obvious to novel), and then describe some of its crucial components. I also help you imagine what your paperless office will ultimately look like.

Learn the Benefits of Ditching Paper

If you’re reading this ebook, chances are you already have a paper-related problem you’re trying to solve. You know the ways in which paper is causing you pain, so it’s apparent how a paperless office would be soothing. But, in fact, a paperless office can solve many problems simultaneously—including some you didn’t even realize you had!

Let’s look at some of the things you can accomplish by moving from paper to digital:

• **Reduce clutter.** Clutter reduction is a recurring theme in this ebook. “Clutter” may refer to the untidy piles of papers that litter your desk and haphazard filing systems, but even a scrupulously organized collection of paper documents counts as clutter if it takes up too much physical space—or too much of your attention—for comfort. Scaling back on paper brings order back into your office, and also frees up space on your desk and in your brain.

• **Save time and effort.** Filing a single document may take just seconds, but the endless process of filing, searching for, retrieving, and replacing papers can add up to hours per week. You’ll still file digital documents, but searching will take far less time and be less error-prone—plus there’s nothing to put back when you’re done.

• **Save money.** In a paperless office, you save a little bit of money on paper (hey, it’s not that expensive in the first place), but when you add up the savings in printers, photocopiers, ink or toner

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Head Off Most Paper before It Reaches You

In the chapter after this one, we begin the process of selecting, setting up, and using a scanner to digitize your papers. Once that’s done, you’ll be able to dispose of (most of) the originals so they no longer clutter your office. That’s great—but wouldn’t it be better still if the paper never reached you in the first place?

Before we attack the current and future paper flow, it makes sense to find as many ways as possible to prevent paper from arriving at your desk at all (assuming, of course, that you can obtain suitable digital replacements). This chapter provides a few ideas along those lines.

Sign Up for Paperless Billing

Most banks, insurance companies, utilities, phone companies, periodicals, schools and colleges, tax offices, and other entities that expect money from you on a recurring basis offer some form of paperless billing and payment. In fact, this practice is becoming so prevalent that some companies now charge extra for paper bills, while others no longer offer them at all. Details vary, but in a typical case you set things up such that you receive bills or statements by email, and then pay either by credit card or by preauthorized bank withdrawal.

I’m a big fan of paperless billing, and use it as much as possible. Without it, I have to contend with a paper check (and frequent checkbook refills), a payment stub, a stamp (often), and a return envelope. And after all that, I still have an outer envelope (into the recycling bin) and a paper bill I’ll probably never look at again (into the filing cabinet).

On the other hand, with paperless billing I generally get a PDF copy of my statement that I file on my disk and the convenience of paying in a few clicks—or, in many cases, none at all. In the case of automatic payments, I also get peace of mind knowing that a faulty memory, illness, or other distraction won’t leave me in the dark or the cold.
Choose a Document Scanner

Although the steps in the previous chapter should help you to cut down on the volume of paper that comes into your life, it won’t stop it altogether—and it won’t eliminate all the paper you’ve already accumulated, either. So we move on to the next phase, which is scanning your documents so you have searchable digital copies, after which you can (at your discretion) recycle, shred, or file the originals. To accomplish this task, you’ll need a scanner—and not just any scanner. In this chapter I explain what makes an ideal scanner for this specific application, list a number of good candidates, and help you decide which one to buy.

I want to warn you up front that the type of scanner I recommend is not cheap—a $50 model probably won’t cut it. But if time is money, then you’ll recoup your investment many times over.

Learn Why Document Scanners Are Different

Eight or ten years ago, when I first realized I wanted a paperless office, I bought myself a scanner that, according to my research at the time, should have been just the ticket. It was a high-resolution flatbed scanner (the kind typically used for scanning photographs) that came with an automatic document feeder (ADF) attachment, so I could lay a stack of papers in the tray, push the button, and—in theory—end up with scanned copies of all of them a few minutes later. But after trying this a few times, I got so frustrated that I gave up entirely. I want you to avoid making the same mistake, so let me explain the problems with my earlier setup:

• **My scanner was sloooooooow.** Admittedly, everything was slower in those days, and it wasn’t the most powerful scanner money could buy. But even at lower resolutions, scanning a single page could take minutes, and that was far too long. Part of the reason for this was that the scanner was designed for precision and fidelity—fantastic for photographs, but overkill for text documents.
Choose OCR Software

One way or another, you need software to turn your raw scans into searchable PDFs. OCR software of some sort most likely came with your scanner, but if it didn’t—or if you’re not happy with its features or accuracy—you have oodles of other choices. This chapter provides an overview of major factors to consider when choosing Mac-compatible OCR software, along with a fairly thorough list of applications from which you can choose.

Determine Your Needs

I haven’t personally tried every scanner and every OCR application mentioned in this book, but I’m going to go out on a limb and suggest that almost any combination of scanner and software can be made to yield acceptable results for the vast majority of users. I have my preferences, but based on the testing I’ve done, my sense is that unless you have unusual needs or are exceptionally picky, the path of least resistance is simply to use whatever software came with your scanner (see Choose a Document Scanner) and not belabor the decision.

As a result, I don’t go into tremendous detail in this chapter about the specifics of each and every OCR application. Rather, I stick with some fairly high-level concepts and suggest that if you’re curious about a particular application, you download a demo version (assuming the developer offers one; most do) and try it yourself.

However, you may be the sort of person who should look more deeply into the capabilities of OCR tools before jumping in if any of the following statements apply to you:

- **You have (or plan to get) a Doxie.** As of publication time, Doxie is the sole scanner, of those mentioned in this ebook, that doesn’t include any OCR software of its own.

- **You need to scan in multiple languages.** All the OCR programs that I discuss here support English text, and most of them support at least a few other languages too. If you have documents in more than one language (and especially if you have documents that
Configure Your Software

The best OCR software in the world can still produce lousy results if you don’t set it up just so and give it the best possible input material to work with. You’re looking for a combination of settings that gives you the best balance of OCR accuracy, processing speed, image quality, and file size. I help you figure out what those are in this chapter. I also show you several ways to automate scanning so that it takes as little manual effort as possible, and provide guidance about how to file your scanned documents so you can find and use them quickly in the future.

Understand the Scanning Process

The fact that your scanner includes OCR software, or that you’ve purchased such software separately, doesn’t necessarily mean that the process of creating a searchable PDF from a scanned document will be straightforward. It might be, but more often than not, it’s necessary to think through a multi-stage process, which may involve configuring the settings in two or more pieces of software.

Every scanner comes with customized software that handles the low-level communication between the scanner and your computer. For example, if you have a Fujitsu ScanSnap, the scanner-specific software is called ScanSnap Manager; with a Canon imageFORMULA scanner you’d use Canon CaptureOnTouch; with an Epson scanner it would be Epson Scan; and so on. This software is responsible for taking the raw data your scanner produces and turning it into a bitmap image stored on your hard disk. As a result, this software always provides some means of setting preferences such as resolution, destination, and file format. The scanner’s software may include many other capabilities, too, but for the moment, assume that its only purpose is to spit out a bitmap image, as shown in the top row of Figure 1.

If you were scanning photos, then the bitmap image would be all you’d need. But for scanned documents, an additional step is generally necessary (the bottom row in Figure 1)—another piece of software opens the bitmap image, performs OCR on it, and generates a searchable PDF file.
Create a Workflow for Incoming Paper

Your scanner and software are now set up to process whatever you throw at them. And, you’ve already thought about at least some elements of your workflow, such as what you’ll name your searchable PDFs and where you’ll store them. But to make your life even easier, you should take a moment to think through the physical path papers will take from the time they enter your office to the time they leave it (or get filed)—and how you’ll find and use their contents once the originals are gone. This is the crux of the paperless office: the new workflow you’ll follow, which will require you to adopt or modify some habits.

In this chapter I make sure you have a grip on the strategy for what you’ll actually do when paper appears, and that you understand when and why to keep certain papers—and what you can dispose of.

Create a Physical Paper Path

If you’re an organized, “everything-in-its-place” kind of person, what I’m about to say may seem obvious. But I’ve known few people who keep every piece of paper strictly under control, and many (including myself) who seem to have papers piled everywhere and, as a result, at least occasionally lose track of what’s where, and what needs to happen to which papers. Since you’re about to embark on a new system for dealing with papers, this is an excellent opportunity to figure out, definitively, what happens to all papers as soon as they come into your possession. Thus, I want to propose the following Life Principle:

*Have a well-defined location for every stage of a paper’s journey.*

Let me explain what I mean and how you can make this happen.

Buy Some Boxes

I’m going to ask you to acquire at least two boxes, and maybe as many as six or eight (I explain why in a moment). When I say “box,” I don’t care if it’s an actual box, a plastic or metal tray, a wall-mounted paper
Work Through a Backlog

Your scanner, OCR software, and paperless workflow may do a marvelous job of helping you deal with new paper as it comes in. But if you already have tens of thousands of pages in filing cabinets, you need to deal with all those existing documents too. It can feel overwhelming, but with the right approach you can work your way through even a substantial backlog in a reasonable period of time.

Prune Unnecessary Documents

I grew up in a family of packrats, so to some extent I always feel a compulsion to save everything—not for any specific reason, but just in case it might turn out to be useful some day in the distant future. I try valiantly to fight it, but it always feels a bit painful to get rid of anything. That includes papers, of course, so for many years I accumulated box after box and drawer after drawer of papers, most of which I'll clearly never need to see again.

When I began contemplating my paperless office project, it was obvious that many of those papers could and would disappear, but the significant question was whether they should be scanned first. If I scanned everything, it could take months, and much of that time would be wasted, because the digital copies would do me as little good as the paper copies.

So I readied a recycling bin, steeled myself, and adopted the most ruthless attitude I could muster—and then went through all my paper files, tossing as many as possible. Quite a few struck me as borderline, so I left them, but then repeated the process every six months or so, and each time found more papers I felt I could live without having in either physical or digital form.

If you’ve got such a huge collection of papers that scanning them all would be inconceivable, consider doing the same thing. Everyone’s different, but I can offer some general words of advice about pruning:

- **Start with the low-hanging fruit.** You know you can get rid of old junk mail, printouts of documents you already have in digital form, duplicate copies, unused reply envelopes, and numerous
OCR on the Go

Perhaps you bought a portable scanner (see Portable Scanners) to take with you on business trips. That’s great—but you can’t *always* have your scanner with you. And even if you did, it wouldn’t help with documents that won’t fit in it—menus, posters, billboards, street signs, and so on. But all these and more are still fair game for capture and OCR. You just need a digital camera (which could be the one built into your iPhone or other smartphone) and an app to do the necessary processing. With the right mobile tools, you may find yourself scanning receipts and business cards on the spot.

Learn about Pocket-sized OCR Tools

Very likely you have a device in your pocket that includes a camera, a wireless network connection, and the capability of running third-party software. If so, you can do many of the same things you can do with a desktop or portable scanner and OCR software, and in fact you can do a few cool things more easily. For example:

- You can store photos of business cards, receipts, signs, posters, billboards, and the like in the cloud, and be able to search their text along with all your other notes and documents.

- You can photograph large or awkwardly shaped documents and perform OCR on them almost instantly.

- You can snap a picture of a menu at a French restaurant and, a few seconds later, get an English translation.

- You can capture an image of something containing text and have that text read to you by a synthesized voice. (Sometimes, you can even combine this with translation!)

These sorts of tools are great for travelers, especially those who spend time in places where they don’t read the local language well. But they’re also useful for anyone who, from time to time, wants to create a searchable record of something they can’t physically put through a scanner for one reason or another.
Avoid Common Printing Needs

Now that you’ve taken numerous steps to avoid receiving paper from others, and to get rid of the paper you still do receive, there remains another piece of the puzzle: how to stop generating more paper of your own. Kicking the printing habit can be hard, but in this chapter I help you to identify alternative ways in which you can achieve roughly the same end result.

Think (and Track) When You Print

You may hit Command-P dozens of times each day, out of habit or necessity. Sometimes printing truly is necessary—until all your business associates and family members join the paperless revolution, you’ll be obligated to print certain things for their consumption. But countless pages are printed every day just because the documents’ creators wanted to have copies “for their records” or “just in case.” Those printed pages are the ones you can most easily eliminate.

So, as an exercise, try this for a week. Put a piece of paper—yes, paper!—next to your printer, with three columns: Document, Pages, and Purpose. Every single time you pick up something from the printer, jot down the following information:

- **Document**: Could be the document’s name, or just a word or two that reminds you what it was.

- **Pages**: The number of pages in that document.

- **Purpose**: Let’s keep it simple, and make it one of F (for file), R (for review), or O (for other people). Things you print out simply to put in a folder or filing cabinet get an F; things you print out because you need to read them on the plane, or mark them up with comments, or otherwise review them, get an R; and things you print because you have to give or send them to someone else get an O. (Feel free to expand or customize this list according to your needs.)
Sign Documents without Paper

When a document requires a signature, it’s natural to assume that requires ink on paper. And sometimes it does, but in a great many situations, you can “sign” and electronically deliver a document, whether you originally received it in digital or physical form.

In this chapter I begin by talking about situations in which the recipient needs to see your handwritten signature. For many contracts, legal agreements, and other day-to-day business documents, you can substitute a scanned copy of your signature.

There’s also another concept you should be aware of—a digital signature, which is a way of certifying that you, and you alone, are the sender of a message or the signatory of a document. I cover this sort of signature briefly toward the end of the chapter.

Determine When a Pseudo-Signature Is Acceptable

When someone asks you to sign a document, simply ask this question:

*Can I return this by fax or email, or is an original signature required?*

You’d be surprised how often electronic transmission of a signature is considered perfectly valid. I’ve done this dozens of times myself—for example, when returning contracts for writing magazine articles and doing technical reviews for new books. If the other party is content with fax or email, I’m only happy to oblige. (And, as I explain shortly, you can send a fax by email, so it amounts to the same thing.) In cases where only an original signature is accepted, I send a piece of paper, but in my recent experience that happens mainly in cases where the thing to be signed is of tremendous gravity (or a lot of money is involved). You’ll probably need ink on paper for a lease, bank loan, or affidavit, but for run-of-the-mill contracts and agreements, an electronic signature should suffice.
Fax without Paper

You may think of fax as an outmoded technology that was long ago supplanted by email, but countless people still send and receive faxes every day. In certain environments—notably medical and legal practices—it’s widely considered more reliable and more secure than email. If you can’t remember the last time you had to deal with faxing documents, feel free to skip this chapter. But if you do find a need to send or receive documents by fax, even if only occasionally, this final chapter explains how to do so without owning a fax machine or generating any paper.

Receive Incoming Faxes

I’m not shocked that people still send and receive faxes, but I am a bit baffled as to why anyone would want a fax machine, as such, in this day and age. They’re bulky and require special consumables (beyond what you already buy for your printer). Although a fax machine can sometimes share a landline with a telephone, doing so makes it more awkward for both the fax sender and the receiver—and if you give it a separate line, then that’s an extra monthly expense. Who needs all that bother?

Since you’re a Mac user, you have (at least) two excellent ways to receive faxes without having an extra box on your desk, and without generating extra paper. I’ll tell you about my favorite method first—the fax-to-email gateway—and then say a few words about using a modem.

Note: I’m deliberately omitting multi-function devices (combination printer, scanner, and fax machine) from this discussion, because most of the arguments against using a stand-alone machine for receiving faxes apply equally to them, too.

Use a Fax-to-Email Gateway

A fax-to-email gateway works like this. You sign up with a provider and receive a private fax number. (Usually, you get to choose the area code—and sometimes the exchange too.) When a fax machine dials that number, a computer answers, receives the incoming fax, and saves
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About the Author

Joe Kissell is Senior Editor of TidBITS and the author of numerous print and electronic books the Macintosh, including Take Control of Upgrading to Lion and Take Control of Running Windows on a Mac. He is also a Senior Contributor to Macworld, was the winner of a 2009 Neal award for Best How-to Article, and has appeared on the MacTech 25 list since 2007. Joe has worked in the Mac software industry since

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In his increasingly imaginary spare time, Joe likes to travel, cook, walk, and practice t’ai chi. He lives in Paris with his wife, Morgen Jahnke, their son, Soren, and their cat, Zora. To contact Joe about this book, send him email at jwk@me.com and include Take Control of Your Paperless Office in the subject so his spam filters won’t intercept it.

**Shameless Plug**

Although I write about computers as my day job, I have a great many other interests, which I write about on several Web sites, including Interesting Thing of the Day and my personal blog. You can find links to all my sites, a complete list of my publications, and more personal details about me at JoeKissell.com. You can also follow me on Twitter (@joekissell).

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About the Publisher

Publishers Adam and Tonya Engst have been creating Apple-related content since they started the online newsletter *TidBITS*, in 1990. In *TidBITS*, you can find the latest Apple news, plus read reviews, opinions, and more (http://tidbits.com/). Adam and Tonya are known in the Apple world as writers, editors, and speakers. They are also parents to Tristan, who thinks ebooks about castles would be cool.

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