
System Preferences in Leopard

By **Graham K. Rogers**

When I first started writing about System Preferences in OS X, 10.5, Leopard, at the suggestion of a [Bangkok Post](#) reader, I expected that it would take a few weeks to complete. I began with the intention of using the London telephone directory as a guide: A - D, E - K, L - R and S - Z. That soon fell by the wayside as some preferences needed a more detailed examination. In addition, the annual MacWorld Conference in San Francisco, new products from Apple, book reviews and other software intervened.



We have now been examining System Preferences for around 12 months. It became clear to me also in the last few months of writing these Bangkok Post articles that, although I had a separate index page listing these and some other useful resources, a total consolidation would be more useful for users. It was just a short jump to the idea of a downloadable PDF. There is not enough information to go to print, and some of this will be changed when Snow Leopard, OS X, 10.6 is released, probably in 2009.

This guide is certainly not definitive. What I have ended up with is a brief and somewhat personalised overview of the preferences as a way to help new users (particularly) overcome any problems they might have and to understand what is available in OS X: this is aimed therefore, in part, at those moving (or trying to move) from Windows where things are somewhat different. As I have prepared this for its PDF format I have gone through each part again and updated the information where necessary (for example in Sharing and the change from .Mac to Mobile Me); added parts that were missing (Keyboard & Mouse, QuickTime); revised the links, so this can be used as a way to access online pages; and corrected any spelling errors I have found (I expect I have missed a few though).

Before trying anything new, such as changing settings or turning features on or off, users are urged to back up all data -- you should be doing this anyway -- and I take no responsibility for any havoc you might wreak on your own computer.

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For most ordinary users, System Preferences is the core of the system: where much fine-tuning takes place. With OS X, Leopard, there have been several changes, including a spiffy new icon.



System Preferences Panel: Section View

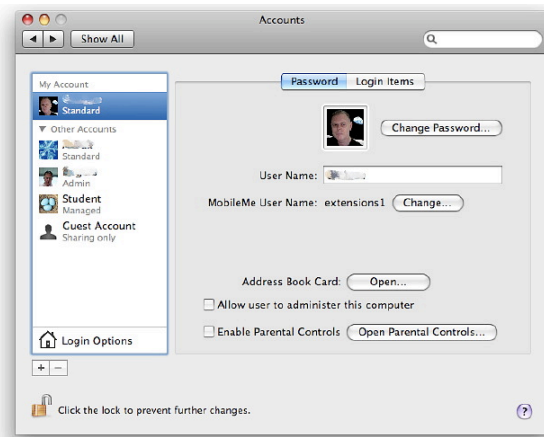
When a user opens the panel icons are organised in five categories: Personal, Hardware, Internet & Networking, System and Other. The last showing preferences installed for third-party system tools. In that section I have DivX and Flip4Mac WMV, which are for video displays; Growl, a network notification tool (for example when Mail arrives); and Macaroni, for regular maintenance procedures.



System Preferences Panel: Alphabetical

Using the View menu, however, I organise my preferences alphabetically and A, is for Apple. And Accounts.

From the main Accounts panel it is easy enough for an Admin user to add or remove an account; or for the user to change a password. The user panel also integrates with the [Mobile Me](#) settings for that user name.



Accounts Preferences Panel

The pane has two main sections. In the left are basic information of the user accounts while to the right is a panel that has two buttons: Password and Login Items. At the bottom of the left panel is a Login Options selector. Below this are plus (+) and minus (-) signs to add or delete accounts. As with many of the other preferences panels a padlock icon in the bottom left restricts access and we must have an Admin username and password to open this.

By default, if there is a single user account on OS X, that will have Administrator privileges. Clicking on the Add icon displays a panel with the type of account selected by a button and pull down menu, followed by the name a user wants to give the account.

Below is a panel for "Short Name." It is critical that, once entered and the account created, that this is not changed: this affects the behaviour of the Home directory and any related functions, including access to data.

A password is entered and, although some users try this, the Enter/Return key is a dangerous way to try and avoid password use: a warning is given if this is used. To the right of this sub-panel is a small key icon, which brings up a utility that can help a user select a password from the simple to highly complex. A colour bar indicates a security rating from red (poor) to green.

Once a password is selected, we are asked to verify: the two entries should match. Below this is a panel in which we can enter information to help us remember the password should it be forgotten. This information will appear in the main login screen after three failed attempts. Below is a check box for turning on file vault: an encryption feature that protects data and is also accessed from the Security preference. When all selections are made, we may either press Cancel or Create Account. OS X will make a new user account which takes a few minutes.

Login Options may be accessed by checking the icon at the bottom of the user panel and this applies to the entire system, not to single accounts. Top of the panel is the Automatic Login button: this can be disabled for best security (users enter passwords to access their accounts), or can be selected for specific accounts, so that when a computer is turned on that account is always opened.



Login Options Panel

At login, we are able to display either a list of the users who have accounts on the computer or a simple panel in which the name and password are to be entered. The latter is more secure and this feature is also selected here. Below are four check boxes: display of buttons for Start, Sleep and Restart in that login panel; Show input menu in login Window, which allows selection of different language keyboards; Show password hints (for the forgotten password); and Use VoiceOver at login window, when a system voice will announce data as a way of assisting those with seeing difficulties.

A final check-box in this panel allows fast User Switching, by which it is possible to switch between accounts without logging out or closing applications each time. We may also choose here whether to display the account information as an icon, a name or a short name.

Appearance, is in four sections and controls the way that the Finder displays panels. The first item is itself named Appearance and this has two selections: blue and graphite. These change the colour of things like download progress bars. Graphite also changes the colour of the red/yellow/green controls at the top of a panel (for close, hide and minimise) to the dull graphite colour. This was intended to help those who work in graphics.

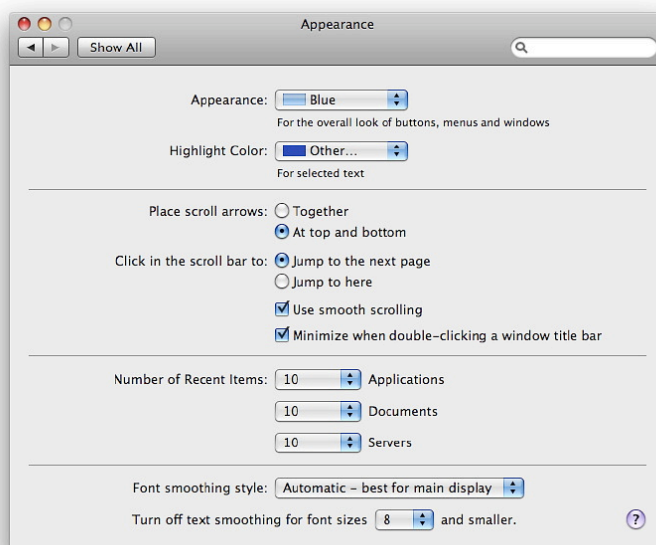
The Highlight colour controls the way that a highlighted file name is displayed in the Finder, or the colour of highlighted text. There are eight default colours, but "Other" allows a user to choose any colour using a selector.

At the user panel, the left side shows all accounts on the computer plus a "Guest" a new feature in Leopard that is for sharing and is not an account that is for general use. The user currently logged in is displayed at the top and the Password panel to the right allows certain changes: the login image may be changed by clicking on it and choosing either one of the offered icons or "Edit Picture"; the password may be changed by clicking on a button which reveals the same password creating panel that is used when the account is first set up; the user name (not Short name) which may be changed; and (if used) the Mobile Me name which can also be changed.

Below is a button to select the Address Book Card which links with the contacts application and sets up the users card, details of which are used in Mail and other applications and may be exported as a Vcard. A check box below allows the user to have admin privileges for the computer, but this comes into effect only when the users logs out and back in. This may not be selected if the padlock icon is shut. Finally in this panel is a check box to enable parental controls: a method by which a users application use and internet access may be restricted.

The other button in this main panel, Login Items, lists those applications or files that are started when the user logs in to the account. A check-box allows these to be hidden. If the list is overlong it may delay the

process. As some applications are added automatically when installed, it may be useful to check from time to time so that these may be pruned. A file, such as a tune may also be placed in this list by use of the + icon. This would open iTunes and play that music on each login -- such a trick does cause some delay of course.



Appearance Preferences Panel

The second section controls the placing of scroll arrows in a panel as well as the way the scroll bar operates. The arrows may be "Together", in which case they are both positioned at the bottom of a panel, or "At top and bottom" may be used: the up arrow is at top, the down arrow at the bottom. In addition the behaviour of scrolling is selected here: smooth scrolling on or off; and there is an extra control to minimise a page or panel quickly by just clicking on the top of it. It then disappears into the Dock.

The next section controls the number of "Recent Items" that can be listed. This controls a menu item in the black, apple menu at the top left of a screen. This assists a user with a swift way to re-open a program or file. In addition, the Servers item allows a quick reconnection to a network connected disk or computer.

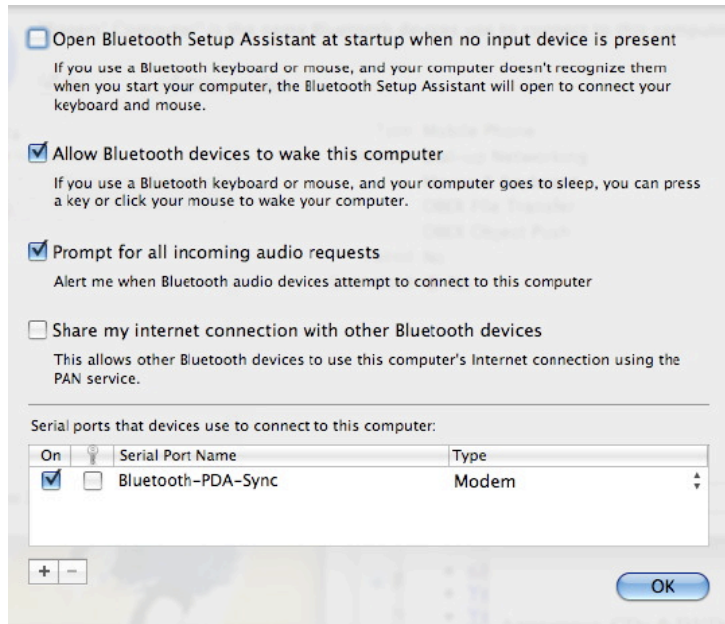
Last in the Appearance panel are two controls for the way fonts are displayed. Font smoothing style, which has four ways in which this may be applied; and lastly a control to turn off this feature for smaller fonts -- the size may be changed by the user -- as this feature may affect clear display of text.

The Bluetooth panel has been cleaned up somewhat compared with the Tiger display. The panel is in two parts: the left side shows devices which are paired; while the right panel shows information about those devices. At the bottom of the left panel are three small controls: plus (+) for adding a device, minus (-) for deleting a device, and a tiny gear icon which allows actions, such as sending a file or browsing, plus configuration of devices, editing of serial ports and display of more information.

This control may be used instead of the Bluetooth File Exchange utility or the menu-bar control (when the box for this is checked in this panel) although the other methods are somewhat easier if the panel is not already open.

Not all devices may use the Configure feature here, depending on if they have already been fully set up. In that case, the feature does not appear in the menu when the device is highlighted. The Edit Serial Port item is for the setting of the device itself (like a Bluetooth phone). The settings are usually created by OS X when initially pairing and should not be changed unless a user is familiar with the type of port or the

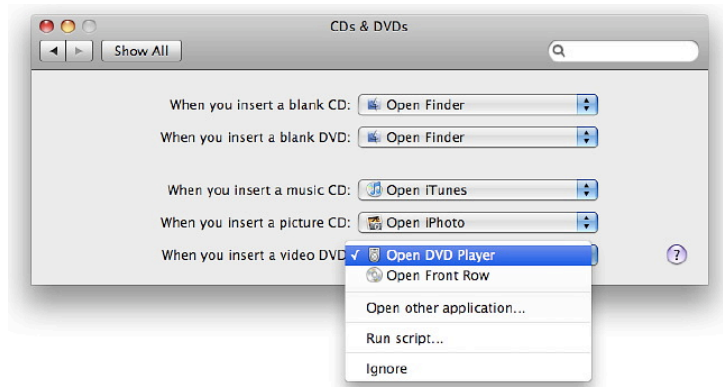
service that is being modified. *Show more Info* in the gearwheel menu gives a full reading in the right panel of all the settings and features available on a device.



Bluetooth Preferences - Advanced

At the bottom right of the Bluetooth preference pane, is an Advanced button. Clicking on this reveals an additional panel in which there are four controls for when attaching or using Bluetooth devices. A panel displays the serial ports used by devices. The + control allows us to add more serial ports if required.

The CDs & DVDs preference pane controls ways in which OS X reacts when disks are inserted into an optical drive. Five media are included: blank CDs, blank DVDs, music CDs, picture CDs and video DVDs.



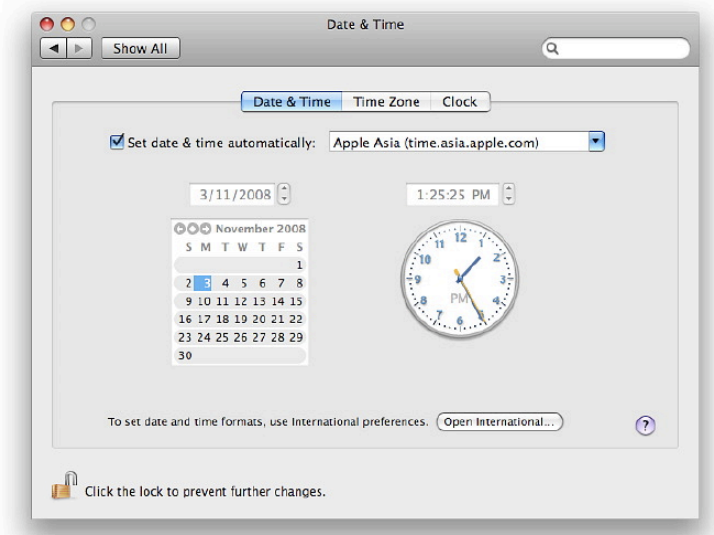
CDs & DVDs Preferences Panel

Beside each of the *blank disk* items is a button with a number of choices, the top in each being, "Ask what to do": the Finder will alert a user and the user can then open an application, or deal with the disk in another way. The *specific media* items (music, picture, video) each have as the top selection what may be the default application for most users: iTunes, iPhoto or DVD Player. The user may select other applications, depending on what has been installed.

All five of the buttons also allow a user to run a script or to ignore the disk.

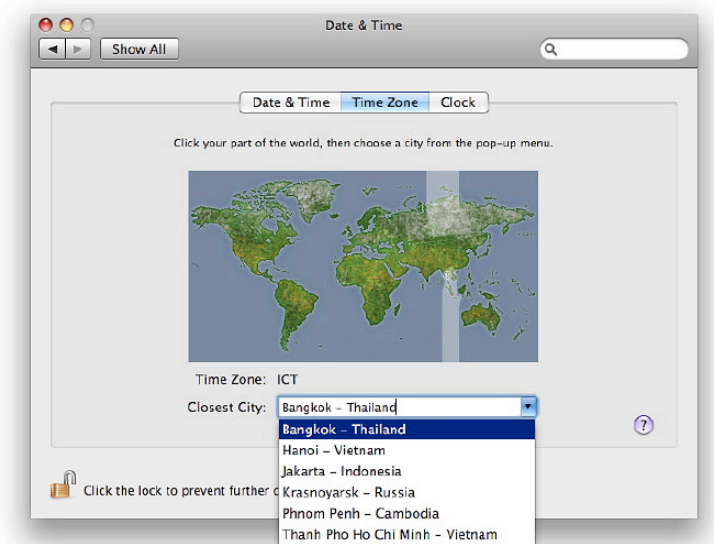
The Date & Time preferences are basically unchanged from Tiger. There are three parts to the panel,

each selected using a button: Date & Time, Time Zone and Clock. The panel can be locked (the padlock icon is at the bottom left) to prevent changes.



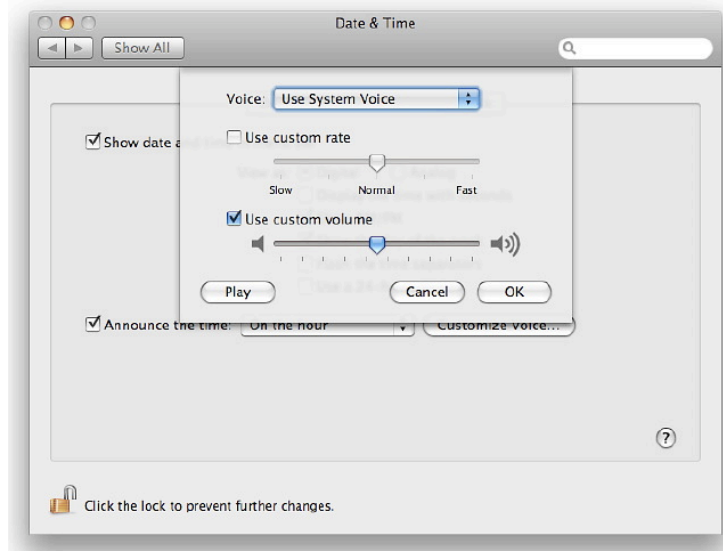
Date & Time Preferences Panel

There are two main parts to the first section, Date & Time. To the left is a calendar to allow setting of the date. This should not be needed under normal circumstances, but if a battery fails and there is no alternative power source, the date and time may be reset (sometimes to 1 Jan of a year way in the past). Above the calendar is a small window with the date displayed. Highlighting each part (day, month, year) allows a quick change to be made with the scrolling arrows at the right. There are similar arrows above the analogue clock which allow us to change the time. These are both inactive, however, if the check box above these (Set date & time automatically) is active as the computer will check time when online using Apple's own services in Asia, Europe or the US. The date and time formats can be set via a button which links to the International preferences.



Time Zone Panel

Time Zone reveals a panel with a map of the world displayed. Clicking on the location we are in highlights the time zone, shows its name (London is shown as GMT) and reveals a selection of cities in the same time zone, allowing us to select the closest.

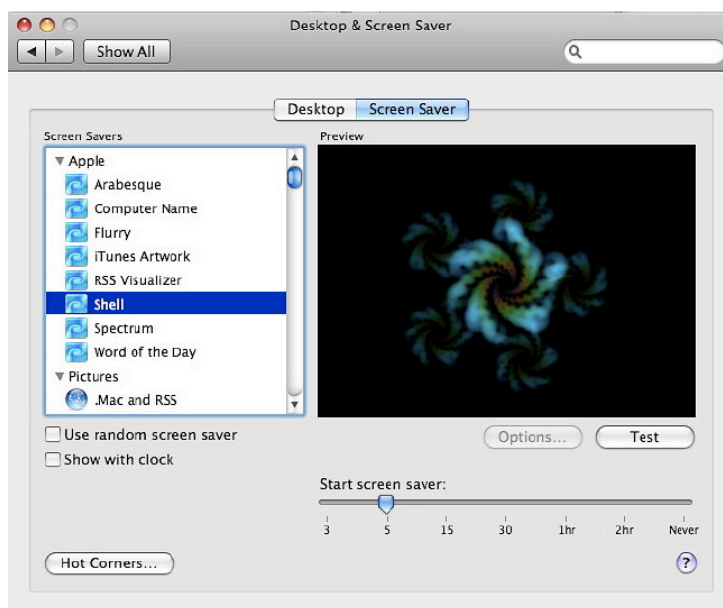


Clock Display - Voice selector Panel

The final section allows us to display the time and date in the menu-bar and the style of that display: for example, analog or digital; and using a 24-hour clock. An additional feature here is to allow the computer to announce the time at intervals: on the hour, half-hour, or quarter hour. The voice can also be selected here using the button to the left. This voice is selectable and may be independent of the system voice. The speed and volume may also be changed in this panel. A button here allows us to check the delivery before pressing OK to confirm.

The Desktop & Screensaver preference has some interesting changes. While the Desktop picture can be selected from a standard set of system images, the iPhoto albums are also included, giving access to a user's own photographs.

Any desktop image may be displayed in a number of ways. There are three ways to fill the screen (Fill, Fit and Stretch) and images may also be centred. A "Tile" setting may be used, although image size comes into play. It is also possible to change the picture with several time-settings, from 5 seconds up to a day. "At login" and "Waking from sleep" are also options here. Such a rotation of images every few seconds may slow the computer.



Screen Saver Preferences: Apple Images

Screen Savers are in two groups: Apple images and Pictures. There are a couple of interesting additions

to the Apple list: Arabesque, Shell and Word of the Day. This selects a word from the installed dictionary and provides a brief definition. The word of the day for Sunday was "rencounter": a chance meeting; a battle, skirmish or duel. Also in this grouping are iTunes artwork, for display of album covers, and the RSS feed screen saver.



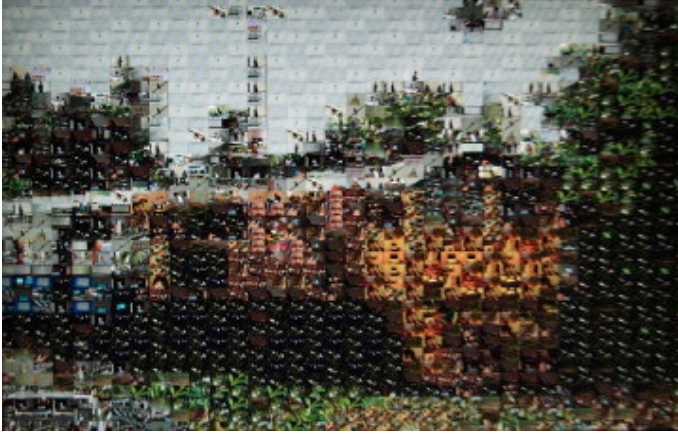
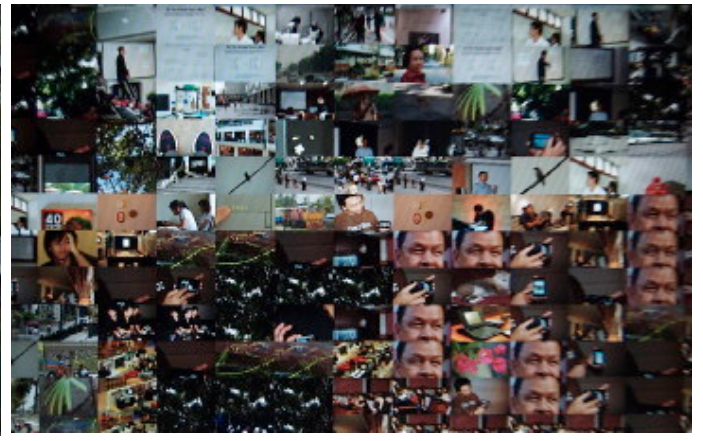
Screen Saver Preferences: Photographs

The Pictures group of Screen savers again uses some of the earlier high quality photographs that come with the system, as well as the user's own selections, including those in the iPhoto library. With this group, however, there are now three display styles: slideshow, collage and Mosaic. I could watch the last one all day.



Screen Saver Preferences: Collage

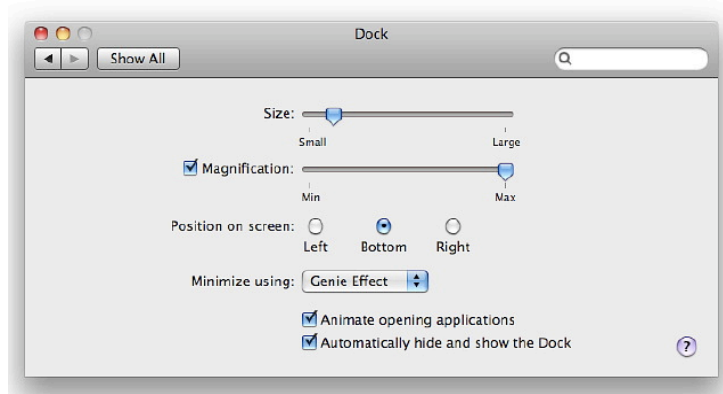
It begins with one picture as the core, then zooms out, adding scores of other images to the frame, so that each then becomes a tiny part of the next full screen picture. When that next image is almost complete, there is a moment of rendering and the image is seen in its full form. If one can remember the posters for the Jim Carrey movie, "Truman", the same effect was used there: stand back and the full picture is revealed; move in close and you could see the hundreds of individual photographs.



The Displays preference panel gives one access to the different screen resolutions that may be used. For example, for the MacBookPro, I am able to select from 640 x 480 (which iPhoto objected to) right up to my usual 1440 x 900 with 11 options in between, including some "stretched" versions.

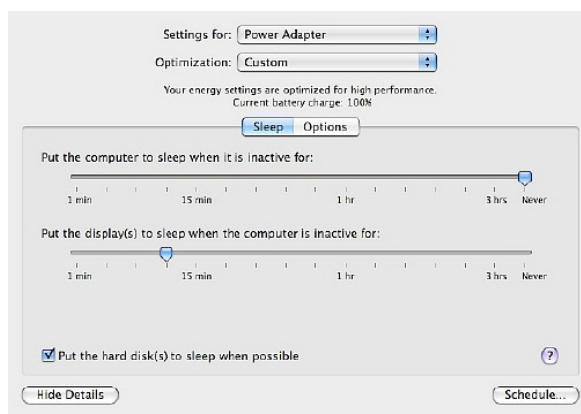
Brightness can be adjusted here with a slider (as well as using the F1 and F2 keys). Just below the slider is a check-box to allow brightness to change depending on ambient light. A button accesses the colour profile for the display which can be adjusted if necessary. When a second monitor is attached, the preference changes to allow either mirrored images or side by side displays as well as a second panel to change the resolution of the extra monitor.

To end the D's we have the simple Dock preference which provides adjustments to this feature. The same changes may be made using the Dock's divider and the Control key: magnification, position, size, hiding and how files are minimized (scale or Genie effect).



Dock Preferences Panel

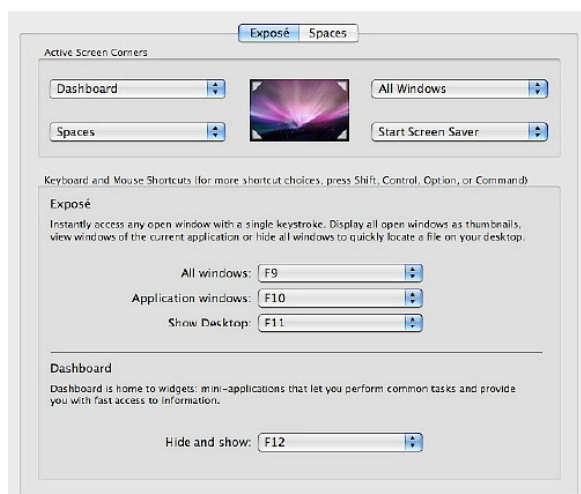
The **Energy Saver** panel is to control sleep, displays and the hard disk. It has two parts: Sleep and Options. "Options" reveals check-boxes for administration purposes: for example "Wake for Ethernet access", or restart on power. This also controls the menubar icon.



Energy Saver Preferences

With notebook computers "Sleep" has settings for Power Adapter and Battery. While Apple has defaults for both, users may want to adjust these for specific conditions. An Optimization button reads, "Custom." Slider-bars control changes to the time before the computer or the display sleeps. Times are between zero and three hours, plus Never. The display slider works in conjunction with Screensaver preference. If the display is set to sleep before the screen saver is due to activate, a text warning appears. A button (bottom right of the "Sleep" panel) marked Schedule, opens a panel to set times for the computer to start or wake automatically, plus shut down, sleep or restart.

Exposé is now coupled with the new feature, Spaces, in a two-section panel. Exposé (which has the French acute angle over the e) controls how the mouse can be used to input additional commands. At top is Hot Corners: specific actions may be chosen when the mouse is moved to a corner of the screen. There are eight actions (plus nothing): the three Exposé commands, Dashboard (widgets), Spaces, screensaver actions and display sleep.



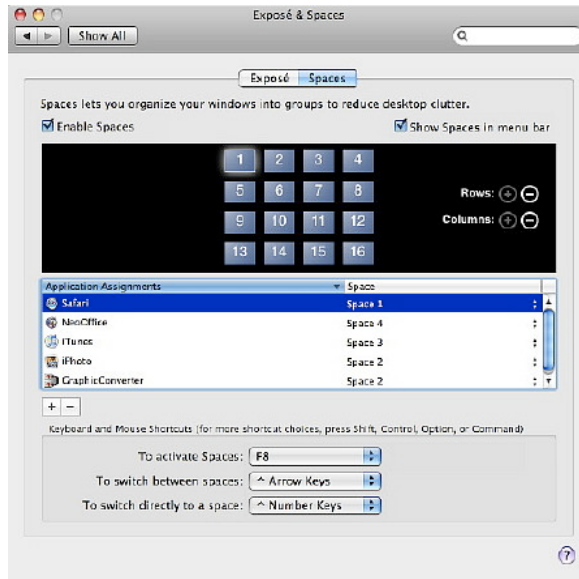
Exposé Preference Panel

When I leave the computer I move the mouse to the bottom right corner and the screensaver comes on. This is linked to a Security feature requiring a password, so the computer is more secure.

Control for Exposé itself is in the panel centre. This works in three ways: showing all open windows (thumbnails); highlighting the current application; and clearing the window, allowing unobstructed

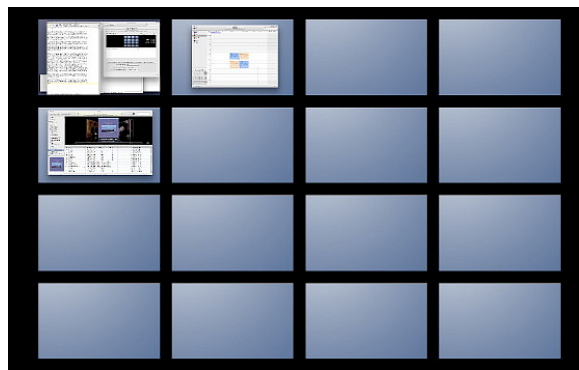
access to the desktop.

Default keys are F9, F10 and F11. Buttons allow from a selection of over 20 keys. These may be supplemented by other keys (e.g. Shift). Below is the key for control of Dashboard: access to widgets. The default is F12, but this may be changed to any Function key. Notebook computers may also need these keys to be used with the Fn key (bottom left).



Spaces Preference Panel

Spaces is new for Apple but was first developed by Xerox and is used in some Linux installations where (I am told) up to 32 windows may be used. By default, Spaces is off in Leopard, but a check box in the preference panel activates it. The default has 4 desktops (2 x 2) which may be increased to 16 (4 x 4).



Spaces

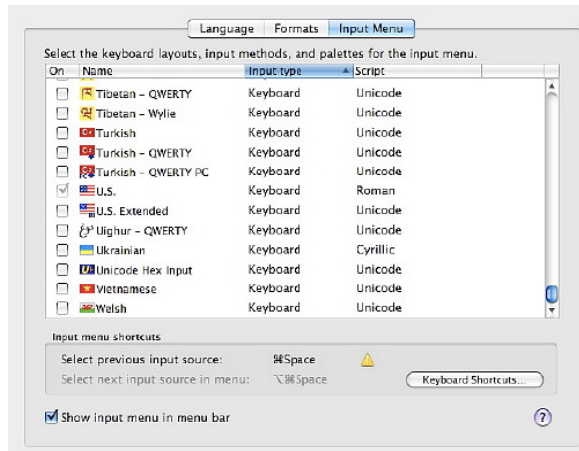
The panel allows control of this feature: by an icon in the menubar or the use of Hotkeys. Activation is via the F8 key which may be changed to any other key (and supplemented). There are also keys to switch between spaces, or directly to a space. An application can be assigned to a space in this panel. Applications can also be dragged from one space to another using the full Spaces screen or by moving the application to the edge of the screen.

The International menu controls the use of languages as well as other settings for those who are not in the US. It is in three parts: Language, Formats and Input Menu.

By default Thai is not one of the selected languages and this needs to be added by first clicking on the Edit List button, then checking the box next to the *Pasa Thai* item, which is initially close to the bottom, along with Persian, Nepali, Dzongkha and others: 128 in total. The main language panel allows sorting

order to be specified and the way line breaks are made when text is displayed.

Formats gives one access to the way information is displayed, for example in messages and documents. If one selects Thai, Thai characters are displayed for the day and month. I choose Custom, although I do select the default currency as "Thai Baht". Other settings here adjust the way numbers are displayed (decimal point or comma) and the measurement system (metric).



Input Menu: International Preferences

The Input Menu allows selection of specific keyboards and if any keyboard is activated a menubar icon can be added for easy switching. The US flag is default as Apple is from Cupertino, but this may be changed. There are over 140 keyboards to choose from (including several Chinese, Japanese and Vietnamese), right down to Welsh. Near the bottom of the panel is the current key combination for fast switching between keyboards (I use the command key plus the space bar), but there is a button for access to all Keyboard Shortcuts so that this may be changed to suit the user.