

# Leopard update well worth it for Mac users



John Deans

From Tony the Tiger pushing Kellogg's Frost Flakes to Exxon's "Tiger in Your Tank," big cats have been used for icons and mascots for decades now. Since the Mac OS (Operating System) had been completely rewritten since version 10 in the

year 2000 when it was originally named "Cheetah," Apple Computers have been utilizing cat names with every upgrade.

I got confused last week when I promoted this week's article by listing Jaguar (version 10.2) as the next topic when I meant the latest version of Mac OS which is actually Leopard (version 10.5). Here is the progression and naming of Mac OS over the past seven years:

- Mac OS X v10.0 (Cheetah)
- Mac OS X v10.1 (Puma)
- Mac OS X v10.2 (Jaguar)
- Mac OS X v10.3 (Panther)
- Mac OS X v10.4 (Tiger)
- Mac OS X v10.5 (Leopard)

I had recently upgraded our iMac from Tiger (version 10.4) to Leopard (version 10.5) with over 300 new features, improvements and updates and I want to share a several of those new

digital feline items with you today.

The iMac I bought my wife for Christmas has been a good learning experience. After I got around the problem sharing the printer between the iMac and the other Windows-based computers in the house

things have been better.

This was done by purchasing a new network ready printer, plugging it directly into our home Ethernet network and installing the driver on all the PCs and the iMac.

Having that printer hardwired to either the iMac or any of the Windows PCs gave me problems from one or the other environments. Those problems for the most part went away after going strictly network printing.

The 20-inch monitor of the iMac has everything (mother board, CPU, hard drive, DVD, speakers, camera, microphone, and all ports) built in and it has worked flawlessly since we bought it last year. We can even share files between it and the PCs through the "Connect to Server" utility under the Finder.

When I unpacked the iMac

from its original box just after Christmas, it had a DVD disc with the Mac OS version 10.5 Leopard upgrade on it, but the iMac was already pre-loaded with the previous version 10.4 Tiger OS. Being new to the 10.x OS levels, I left it at Tiger for the past four months so I could learn that environment before I jumped to Leopard.

In late March I was working on an e-mail problem with iMail and decided to go ahead with the Leopard upgrade to see if that would fix the problem. So, on a light chore weekend I inserted the Leopard DVD upgrade disc into the built-in DVD player slightly hidden on the right side of the iMac's monitor and started up the OS upgrade.

After answering a few questions it loaded and rebooted a few times. While I attended my other activities, after an hour it had finished the upgrade process. Knowing how important fixes and patches are to any new OS, I immediately updated the new Leopard OS with all required updates which took another hour and over 200 MB of downloads to complete.

The main screen looked cooler with a 3D feel to the dock at the bottom. That iMail problem was

still there though, which pushed me to searching the Apple forum the next day to finally find a solution using SSL and some non-standard port numbers to POP and SMTP email settings.

I was still glad I had done the upgrade since Mac OS support is officially in my service offerings of Deans Consulting. My formal Leopard OS training consisted of an eight-hour course with 111 lessons by Jesse Feiler on VTC.com and a good deal of hands-on time with our Leopard equipped iMac.

The first obvious change in the Leopard OS is the desktop and the new 3D Dock. The dock acts as a fan or a grid depending on the number of documents open.

It now has a new dynamic stack effect for both downloads and working documents providing an expanding view that makes it easy to find things you are working with.

The Finder has been revamped to have "Cover Flow" which gives the user the ability to actually see what is in files rather than see just generic icons. This came from the "Cover Flow" utility in the

iPod and iPhone which let's you see the album covers as you fan through them.

One of the biggest and most critical improvements to the Mac OS delivered by Leopard is the "Time Machine" utility. This awesome new and easy-to-use application enables users to backup the files in numerous versions on a schedule to an external hard drive like the ones we talk about before. I will write a column soon specifically on Time Machine since I have such a passion for backups.

The new and improved iMail application now has a quick view "Showcase" capability enabling users to quickly find and view emailed content. iMail also easily configures to used Gmail, Yahoo and AOL Email services.

If online chatting is your thing, the updated iChat allows you to now record both audio and video of the conversation. It also lets you insert any video or picture into your background giving it a professional effect for presentations.

With Tabbed Chats, multiple logins, even invisibility the new

iChat is jammed packed with features and functionality.

Like Internet Explorer (IE) is to Windows, Safari is to Mac OS being the built-in web browser. The upgraded Safari is the fastest browser around now being three times faster than Firefox and five times Opera. Offering tabbed browsing, PDF zooming, "InLine" look ups, and at-will resizing, the Safari browser inside Leopard offers quick and enjoyable Web surfing.

Finally for you parents out there, Leopard offers built-in content filtering, time limits and even bed-timers to keep those Mac-Kids online safe and within limits.

Bottom line: Apple Computer continues to perfect perfection with the latest Mac OS Leopard, which is well worth the upgrade time.

Next week's column: Monitoring teen driving.

*John Deans of DeansConsulting.com is a Brenham area computer networking consultant who can be reached at 289-2233 or John@DeansConsulting.com for questions and comments.*