

## Re: The Dock through the years

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- *From:* [real-address-in-sig@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:real-address-in-sig@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx) (Rowland McDonnell)
  - *Date:* Tue, 23 Oct 2007 16:51:59 +0100
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Andy Hewitt <[wildrover.andy@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:wildrover.andy@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote:

Rowland McDonnell <[real-address-in-sig@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:real-address-in-sig@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote:

I don't believe I do have a 'lack of speed' issue here.

<shrug> Who can tell? You don't mind the speed you work at. It sounds slow to me. <shrug> again.

Well, in my case the limiting factor is me, just about all forms of input could probably be operated faster by someone else. However, I percieve that things happen pretty much as fast as I could ever want them to, so that's why I don't bother changing it.

Fair enough – but I've noticed that people do tend to be happy with whatever they've worked out for working, and find that whatever method they're using, it feels fast enough. But optimising takes more than just being happy with whatever you've stumbled into.

On the other hand, how much can anyone be arsed to optimise this kind of thing? And in any case, how well can anyone perform the task?

[snip]

56 icons? but it was 40 earlier!

Yes, that's right. I counted each time (but wasn't it 48? I forget). And each report was accurate at the time I made it. Would you believe that this Mac gets used? That \*things change\*! That sometimes I open up apps to do things, and minimise windows, and do all sorts of things.

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I wasn't arguing the point, just curious as to the rather extreme change.

Eh? It's not extreme at all. A very minor change. Okay, at the moment DragThing's process dock has actually gone off the bottom of the monitor 'cos there's so much stuff in it... But that's the way it goes here. One day lots open, the next fewer. I've been a bit crap of late, so there's a lot of half-looked-at-stuff left open – that's the main reason things are so cluttered at the moment.

Of course you'll use your Mac to suit your needs at any time.

Quite.

Now it starts to make a difference.

It's not a lot worse with 56 or 48 icons – either way, it's a pain.

Er, yeah I guess it'll get to a point where it won't get any worse.

Probably – but it does get worse. It's just that once I've hit 30-odd icons, I really can't be bothered with the dock at all 'cos it's such a pain. And 56 icons – well, it's still just barely usable.

The Dock strikes me as an entirely obsolete approach (it's just so stupid, that 'do it all in one place' idea), now I come to think of it, for all that it's got lots of prettiness applied to it.

Well, at your resolutions, yes, that's understandable.

Resolution hasn't got a lot to do with it.

A lot I would think. If you make 56 icons \*appear\* the same size on screens of different resolutions,

But they won't – they'll be different sizes on different screens, I'd expect.

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surely the one with more pixels is going to have better definition.

It all depends on how well the scaling algorithm does as well as comparative real sizes on screen, not to mention the precise screen characteristics.

I doubt there's any real clarity difference between (say) a 10 pixel icon and an 8 pixel icon when both are scaled down from the full-on desktop icons as they are and in the context of appearing in the dock with background clutter.

You've got to bear in mind that the larger number of pixels corresponds to an icon on screen that might well be smaller than the smaller number of pixels version I see.

Nothing is all that simple, you know.

[..]

That's why I like a trackball, just a flick of the wrist, and the pointer is somewhere near where it needs to be.

I hate trackballs for anything but playing Missile Command. They do bad things to my hand, arm, and shoulder – unless I'm playing Missile Command.

That's what made me move away from a mouse, I just kept getting a pain in my wrist.

Trackballs are dreadful for causing me – well, mostly numbness and seized up bits of arm and hand. A bit of pain too.

Using a mouse without that sort of bother for me just means not sitting too diagonally to the desk so I don't have to stretch my right arm. Diagonally? Yeah – I've always liked to have my monitor 'over off in the far left corner' so I've got the desk space in front of me clear. That means I turn diagonally to the desk to use the thing.

[..]

I haven't gnored it, I just don't see it. Using the app switcher by keyboard is a simple left hand movement,

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It's a fairly awkward key combo to hit, and more so when your hand's not on the keyboard.

You have to end up there at some time surely? :-)

Indeed – but it requires a mode switch.

I never really thought about it like that, I have just treated it all as input, and the mouse and keyboard are all part of it

<puzzled> It's just how my mind works. It's all input, but using the keyboard and using the mouse use different brain stuff. It's a mode switch. FWIW, typing restricts what my mind can do in ways that do not apply when using a pen or mouse – there are definite benefits to not having my hands on the keyboard.

with my mouse in the right,  
I have no need to move my  
hand from  
the mouse to open the app  
switcher. As I said before, I  
can see  
this being a problem if you  
were left handed, but you  
didn't state  
otherwise.

If I'm using the mouse, I'm in 'non keyboard mode'. I have hands off the keyboard unless there are special circumstances. If I want to use the keyboard, I have to switch to 'keyboard mode'; a different way of thinking. That mode switch is mental effort, and it takes time to tune back in to the keyboard. So it's often awkward for me. And since I've been doing application switching using mouse only since about 1990...

OK, I must admit that's not something I even thought about,

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as far as  
I'm aware, it just happens. But then I spent 6 years using  
keyboard  
only,

I didn't get to see a GUI until 1985, IIRC.

1991 for me, but I had used a Mac, and seen GUI systems before that.

1985 and I met an Amiga. ARGH! No, I meant 1986. Didn't use a GUI  
until Win 3 later on that decade. Horrible thing. Then I met Macs.  
Not horrible things.

then 5 years using mouse and keyboard on a 320x200 screen.

Ouch.

Atari STFM on a TV.

Ah.

[snip]

But: rather a lot of the modern world – sofas, fridges, and washing  
machines included – assumes rather large doorways. And there probably  
are health and safety regs about doorways such that you'd find your 5'6"  
doorway was only allowed if you put the warning signs up.

I can see your point (although sofas are actually designed to fit into a  
standard container).

I'm sure they also take into account standard doorways – you'd have to.

[..]

And I still can't find any statement where it says it's a 'one  
size fits  
all'.

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ARGH! Of course you won't. So? It's implied that it's a one size fits all solution because it's what Apple gave us to do all application launching, application switching, window hiding, and so on. Apple replaced the excellent UI elements they had before for these different jobs and rolled them all into the Dock and removed the old UI elements.

That's what says it's a one size fits all solution.

Ok, so that's just your interpretation of that then. That's fine, now I understand.

<shrug> My interpretation? I thought it was the consensus one as far as those who have considered the matter in any depth.

I still don't see why we couldn't at least have been left Windowshade and an application menu, but there you go.

I agree with you there.

So: Apple gets rid of those things, and replaces them with the Dock.  
Can you \*really\* not see?

It does do what it says on the tin.

The tin says nothing.

It shows what apps are open,  
it allows launching of apps, and documents, it allows  
switching, and it  
can be customised to some extent.

Yes, but it's very bad at all these jobs. Jack of all trades, competent  
at (never mind master of) none.

That's the bit we don't agree on though.

But we do agree on it: you agree with me that it doesn't suit everyone.  
It's supposed to – but it doesn't.

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Overall, it does do what they say it can.

What is implied is that it's the ideal solution for everything that's its designed to do. All Apple ever does these days is make vague marketing claims and publish lists of features – indeed, much of its so-called documentation is just marketing drivel without any technical worth at all.

Can't argue with that. They sent a proper printed manual with Aperture, and all that says is, 'look how great we made this app'.

In other words, it's not a proper printed manual, is it? It's just marketing material. Most of Apple Help seems to be marketing material rather than documentation. Most Apple alleged 'documentation' that I manage to find on its Website is just marketing drivel.

How well it does those things is the matter of the argument, but nevertheless, all the things it says it can do, it does do.

Indeed – and it does them badly.

<groan>

No, not 'groan': this is the point I have been trying to make all along.

[snip]

Rowland.

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Remove the animal for email address: rowland.mcdonnell@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

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