About This Book

Introduction

What is the purpose of this book?

The purpose of this book is to provide comprehensive advice on troubleshooting Apple® Mac® OS X, specifically Mac OS® X v10.6 Snow Leopard®.

The advice herein is based in part on material I developed as a contributor and Helper on the Apple Discussions — now called the Apple Support Communities — where I am known by the screen name "Dr. Smoke." It is also based on my personal Mac management techniques, years in corporate information technology (IT) roles, extensive testing of Mac OS X, and research of known problems reported on the AppleCare® Knowledge Base.

This book is the fifth in the *Troubleshooting Mac OS X* series of e-books. Previous editions covered Mac OS X 10.2 Jaguar, both Jaguar and Mac OS X 10.3 Panther®, Mac OS X 10.4 Tiger®, and Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard®

My approach to troubleshooting is twofold: *proactive* and *reactive*. *Proactive troubleshooting* involves implementing easy procedures to manage your Mac and Mac OS X with the goals of avoiding problems, minimizing their impact should they arise, and preparing for reactive troubleshooting. *Reactive troubleshooting* applies proven, step-by-step methods and procedures to quickly solve problems when they arise and to prevent their recurrence where feasible.

What qualifies the author to write this book?

Before becoming an independent consultant, I spent nearly a quarter-century in the IT industry in a variety of roles, primarily working for IBM. I have participated in or led projects in: marketing; systems design and development; user education and support; human interface design; IT strategy, management, and standards; advanced technology; project management; quality; business process reengineering; logistics; global business strategy; and competitive intelligence.

Having switched to a Macintosh® in 2000, my technical knowledge served me well and I quickly learned the platform. Eventually I discovered the Apple Discussions. Here my experience in troubleshooting, technical writing, and user support quickly shifted my participation from asking questions to answering them. In 2002, Apple recognized this contribution by inviting me to be a Helper. In June 2006, I achieved Level 5 status on the Discussions, the highest level of recognition available to Discussions contributors at that time.

Why I wrote this book

I began writing the *Troubleshooting Mac OS X* series of e-books with four objectives in mind:

1. To share the accumulated troubleshooting information and knowledge I compiled in a FileMaker® Pro database of answers to questions I posted on the Apple Discussions. I personally researched, developed, tested, and wrote each response. Using and developing this database by regularly answering questions revealed patterns of common problems for which clear, concise, step-by-step solutions, or information on where to find such, were required. The positive feedback these answers received from the Discussions community indicated I was on to something.

2. To provide simple procedures for managing your home- or business-based Mac OS X environment as if a major corporation depended upon it, but without requiring years of training or a professional staff. These essential steps can prevent problems, aid in quickly resolving those that arise, and thereby help to maximize your productivity with your Mac. Simple, step-by-step instructions for implementing these procedures are difficult, if not impossible, for the average person to find and questions concerning such often arose on the Discussions.

3. To write a Mac OS X book that broke from the Gutenberg-era publishing model of printed books, thereby linking my advice with the best troubleshooting resources freely available on the Internet. It may even save some trees.

4. To have fun and earn an honest profit from this work.

Creating and maintaining a database to support my work on the Discussions was natural for me: my experience in user support involved creating one of the largest and most widely-used searchable databases of questions-and-answers for end-user computing within IBM. Having a database also made it easy for me to create standard answers to frequently asked questions, enabling me to help more people efficiently. Furthermore, continually refining and testing the solutions in the database via the Discussions made the answers more effective.

My professional IT experience has also served me well in managing our home and business computing environments with the same efficiency and dedication to "uptime" as in any major corporation, albeit on a scale that any individual can perform. On the Discussions, I frequently provided advice concerning backup and recovery, disk utilities, regular maintenance, and related practices so that others could keep their Macs running smoothly.

While it is easy to buy, set up, and begin using a personal computer today, they are still *computers* and require some "care and feeding." As electromechanical devices, computers are vulnerable to the vagaries of power outages, disk crashes, and other ills. Preventative measures can help to avoid or minimize the impact of these events. For example, while everyone knows they need a comprehensive backup and recovery solution for their Mac, many fail to act until it is too late. To meet this need, I started developing and adding step-by-step prevention and maintenance procedures to my database, documenting the methods I was employing out of habit and experience. As with troubleshooting advice, members of the Discussions community welcomed these "home editions" of corporate IT management practices. This also indicates how important personal computing has become in our daily lives.

As my database grew to 800 items, I decided that one way to make it available to a wider audience would be as a book. To leverage the power of the Internet and electronic publishing, I decided to write and distribute an electronic book or *e-book*. To the best of my knowledge, the first edition of *Troubleshooting Mac OS X* was the first commercial e-book of its kind.

By developing an e-book, I could employ technologies including full-text search and hyperlinking. Using hyperlinks to content both within the book and on the Internet would enhance the reader's efficiency and effectiveness, increasing both their productivity and their enjoyment of their Macs.

I especially wanted to help Mac OS X users leverage the content of the AppleCare Knowledge Base. This treasure trove contains solutions to many common Mac OS X problems. Hyperlinks to AppleCare Knowledge Base documents were included in many of the answers in my database, either as a direct reference to the answer for a question or as part of a comprehensive solution to a complex problem. Nevertheless, my experience on the Discussions indicated that this superb resource is underutilized. Helping more Mac enthusiasts to better awareness and use of the AppleCare Knowledge Base is an indirect goal of this book.

While I have few Mac OS X books in my personal library, I have observed that the books I either own or have browsed generally provide little troubleshooting advice and even less instruction on systems management issues like backup and recovery. For example, one popular book on Mac OS X devotes only two percent of its pages to troubleshooting. While my observation is not based on a scientific survey, in one respect this is as it should be: most books in this genre are written to be either user's guides or compendiums of hints, tips, and the "hidden secrets" of Mac OS X. While necessary and valuable, I did not want to write another such book: the market is saturated and enough has been published on topics such as how to use an animated screen saver as your desktop background.

If anything, my days serving the Mac OS X community by contributing to the Discussions showed that there is a critical need — and hence a market — for a book providing succinct, clear, and proven methods for preventing or solving problems with Mac OS X, in a step-by-step fashion that anyone can understand. Meeting this need is the primary objective of this book.

Hopefully, you will assess *Troubleshooting Mac OS X* as having met its objectives, providing you with helpful information in an efficient and effective format, as well as good value for money. I greatly appreciate your purchase of this book.