

Macintosh Learning Center--- *Shell Weinberg*

Third Floor, Southeast corner

Leisure World Community Center

Laguna Woods Town Centre

Hours: 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday thru Friday

Some info about the Keyboard, Mouse, Trackpad

The Mac's number one peripheral device is not a drive. It's not a printer, scanner, hub, or network. It's you, the user. At least, that's how the Mac sees you. The Mac won't do anything until it receives command signals from you.

Because you can't enter commands in the Mac's language of voltages representing 0s and 1s, you must use the keyboard, mouse, or trackpad. These devices define the interface between you and the Mac.

The keyboard uses the Qwerty layout of the keys that is over 130 years old. (QWERTY... the first 6 letters upper left on the keyboard.) Qwerty was created in 1873 by typewriter inventor Christopher Latham Sholes. The layout was a modification of the one on his 1868 typewriter. A few years later he added the Shift key, which shifted the position of the carriage to allow switching between capital and lowercase letters. In all these years there has never been a successful improvement worthy enough to replace the Qwerty layout and so we see it used on our Mac keyboards.

In addition to the alphanumeric and punctuation keys of the nineteenth century, today's 108-key Apple keyboard includes keys that perform functions, such as Control or Option. When you press a key, the keyboard translates your action into a unique electrical signal that is sent to the Mac. Each key's signal represents a letter, number, punctuation, or function.

The mouse is a more recent invention... the early 1960s brainchild of Doug Engelbart, who was then a scientist at the Stanford Research Institute. In 1966, Engelbart conducted a NASA-funded study that showed the mouse to be the most efficient device for positioning a computer cursor on screen. The SRI later licensed the idea to Apple, which then popularized the mouse by using it in the first Macintosh. Apple used Engelbart's basic mechanical design for 16 years. The Apple Pro Mouse, introduced in the year 2000, now uses optical technology which has no moving parts.

The trackpad in the iBook and PowerBook performs the function of the mouse, although in this case your finger is the only moving part. your finger changes the electrical characteristics of the trackpad, enabling the Book to detect the placement and movement of your finger. However, if you prefer the feel and function a mouse provides you still have the option to connect a mouse into any iBook or PowerBook.

(Source for this column was "HOW THE MAC WORKS", by J. Rizzo and K.D. Clark, published in 2000. Available in our LWMUG Library, #107)