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### **The iPad for Professors: Evaluating a Productivity Tool After One Year**

At ProfHacker, we've published a number of posts about Apple's first-generation iPad. Now that Apple has started selling the second-generation version, we thought it was time for our authors to share their thoughts about using the first iteration, roughly one year after it went on sale.

**Cory Bohon:** Over the past year, my iPad and I have become inseparable when traveling or doing any light work for school or work. Because the iPad weighs only a few pounds, it's a lot easier to lug around than my six- or seven-pound MacBook Pro, and allows me to do most of the work I'd normally do on my notebook—from reading news to keeping up with social networks to blogging to light photo-editing work and uploading (with Adobe Photoshop and Flickr), and, of course, media watching and casual game playing.

One of my favorite applications for my iPad is LogMeIn Ignition. While the application is a little costly, it allows me to connect to my MacBook Pro and visually see and do a little more advanced work while I'm on the go: things like programming, managing other computers, and using FTP while multitasking. LogMeIn Ignition in conjunction with an external keyboard is the ultimate power users' tool kit, especially if you have 3G access on your iPad. Using 3G, I am able to connect back to my Mac at home and use it just as if I were there at my desk.

**Brian Croxall:** At last year's humanities and technology meeting known as THATCamp Prime, I was surprised to see so many people with iPads. Sure, they looked nice, but I didn't think that I would want to rely on such a device as my sole computing option, the way some of the camp's participants were doing. When I was given one in my new job, I was excited but didn't expect it to take the place of my laptop or desktop. And it hasn't. But I have enjoyed it much more than I would have ever thought possible.

Much of what I've done on the iPad is read the things that I save to Read It Later, which I will continue writing about until everyone uses it or Instapaper. The size of the screen and the speed of the processor make it much better than using my aging, first-generation

iPod Touch. But I've also read longer scholarly articles using either iAnnotate or GoodReader. I take it with me to all my meetings, where it works as a great tool for taking quick notes (using Plaintext, everything gets synced to Dropbox), checking relevant Web sites, or responding to Exchange-powered meeting invitations. I've used Keynote to display slide presentations to small groups. And I may have played a game every now and again. While typing on the iPad works fine, I've found that pairing it with my small Bluetooth keyboard is simple and adds up to a viable laptop replacement that weighs less than two pounds and lasted through an entire day of note taking on less than a single charge.

Is it as magical as Steve Jobs claims? Perhaps not. Would I buy one for myself? Yes.

**Billie Hara:** I have been the proud owner of an iPad for about six months, and I honestly don't remember being as productive without it. Is that an exaggeration? No, not really. Others have mentioned the iPad's size and weight, that these make the tablet easy to carry around. I have found that since it is easy to carry, I get a lot of work done at odd times, times that I'm not tethered to a computer. For example, I can handle classroom management (tracking attendance and calculating student grades) using the "attendance" and "numbers" applications. I can update course blogs (I use WordPress) quickly and easily. I can also respond to student work by using Dropbox and iAnnotate. Then, with a simple e-mail program (Gmail, for instance), I am able to send graded work back to students. Over the past month, I handled this daily work at my home, at a local coffee shop, in an airport, on an airplane, at a conference, and in an ER waiting room.

I like being able to write on the iPad (even though the act of typing can be a bit cumbersome, especially if you type quickly, like me). It is easy to make meeting notes, for example, using any number of applications and then e-mailing those notes to myself or to colleagues as JPG or PDF files. Apart from using this device for work-related purposes, I appreciate having access to selected playlists from my iTunes library, being able to view an episode or two of *The Wire*, or playing a few games.

The only downside to owning an iPad is learning the nonintuitive steps needed to navigate programs and applications. These are not hard to learn, but as a non-Mac user, it took me some time to remember where buttons were located and what they did. This isn't a big complaint, however, given all the positive aspects of owning and using this tool.

**Jason B. Jones:** Probably two things have surprised me about the iPad. First, it really is a remarkably convenient note-taking device. I have truly appalling handwriting, and so my life has basically been a series of notepads and folders filled with more or less illegible scrawl. Sometimes I'll make it back to a computer in time to transcribe the notes, but usually I just carry them around until their psychic weight is too much to bear, and then I throw 'em out. Laptops and netbooks can obviously serve a note-taking function as well, but I've never liked having a screen between me and the rest of the room. Plus, you have to get there early, or wait for the thing to come out of suspend. On the iPad, I use Evernote (though any of several text editors would work as well), and so my notes are not only more readable, but they are automatically synced anywhere I might need them. That's nice. The reading/media-consumption aspects of the iPad were not really a surprise, but they've certainly been delightful.

The other big surprise is that while it turns out to be fairly easy to write on the iPad, there is a certain amount of Kool-Aid drinking involved. The vast majority of things I've written over the past year were drafted or edited on the iPad. (In addition to the above, I use Pages and Google Docs a lot.) But the iPad still isn't great at the core elements of online writing—grabbing a URL and short snippets of text, or fiddling with images and layout. The Kool-Aid drinking comes in to the extent that I often find myself asserting that the iPad is a usable blogging tool, which it sort of is. But blogging on it is still more annoying than magical or revolutionary.

On balance, I think fears that the device was primarily for consumption rather than creation were overblown, though I also think that Apple needs to find a way to allow programming apps to run on the iPad. I also can't say I've missed having Flash on the device even one time in the entire year.

**Konrad Lawson:** My iPad never became a device that filled some completely empty part of my daily life. As a certified iSlave, my Apple laptop and iPhone can each do almost everything the iPad can do. Do I regret getting it? Not at all. It has been a nice extra to have for a whole range of tasks. Often found on my kitchen table, it has turned into my "breakfast computer" for reading RSS/Twitter feeds and Web browsing. When I head out, if I'm not up for carrying the laptop, the iPad usually makes the cut.

Since I have all my files accessible via Dropbox (over Wi-Fi) or a significant percentage of my PDF's synced to it via DevonThink To Go (but I usually read any files in GoodReader), I have a whole personal library with me without the weight of my laptop. Other

heavy-use apps: All of Wikipedia gives me a convenient downloaded multigigabyte copy of Wikipedia for reference; OffMaps for great offline maps when exploring new areas; iTeleport for controlling computers remotely (I use this far more than I imagined); Netflix for the couch; and Instapaper has all those Web articles I never got around to reading. I do have a foldable external keyboard and have sometimes taken notes with the iPad, but I still don't find the iPad itself comfortable for heavy writing. Two points to end with: First, that low-battery warning always takes me by surprise; the battery lasts so long I forget that it needs one. And second, I have all the apps above on the iPhone, too, but the far larger screen size really does make the iPad a different experience.

**Mark Sample:** I am not an Apple fan by any means. I use Windows and Linux machines. My phone is an Android. I scoff at my wife's Powerbook. Yet I love my iPad. It's become indispensable for my teaching, research, and other scholarly activities. I rarely play games or watch movies on the device, but I read on it, a lot. Instapaper is great for saving articles and blog posts for later reading. My iPad is also loaded with PDF's related to my teaching and research, which I often take notes on, using iAnnotate. And right now I'm enjoying Mat Johnson's hilariously brilliant new novel, *Pym*, with the Kindle app.

But the iPad isn't simply about the consumption of texts or media. Add a Bluetooth keyboard, and I have an incredibly lightweight writing machine with enough battery power to last me all day long. And to those critics who argue that you can't create media on the iPad, I suggest they spend some time with the new GarageBand app—a boon to any aspiring indie songwriter.

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