

CAMP NEWS

Capital Apple, Mac, Performa User Group

August 12 Potluck Dinner Meeting – 6:00 p.m.

This year, our summer potluck dinner will take place at Adam Tomash's house, 751 High St., West Gardiner. Bring something tasty to eat; CAMP will supply beverages. If you get really lost, call Adam at 582-5248.

The Maine Infonet Download Library—A Hidden Gem

by Jeffrey Frankel, Editor

As many of you know, I'm a big fan of audiobooks. My primary source of material is my subscription to Audible.com, but I'm always on the lookout for other supplies. The Classic Tales podcast is an ongoing offering of public domain stories and novels read by the talented voice actor B.J. Harrison. And every once in a while the iTunes music store runs an audiobook sale.

Maine's public libraries have for many years offered books on tape or CD-ROM. The Maine State Library in Augusta has a large cache of books on CD to lend, although these are almost entirely nonfiction.

Recently a friend told me about a veritable treasure trove of audiobooks: The Maine Infonet Download Library ("MIDL"). I characterized this in the title as a hidden gem, but a more accurate description would be "overlooked"—by me, anyway—as this hidden gem lies in full view for all to see.

To access the MIDL, point your web browser to the Maine State Library. From the library's home page, click the link for Infonet

Free Wireless at Barnes & Noble

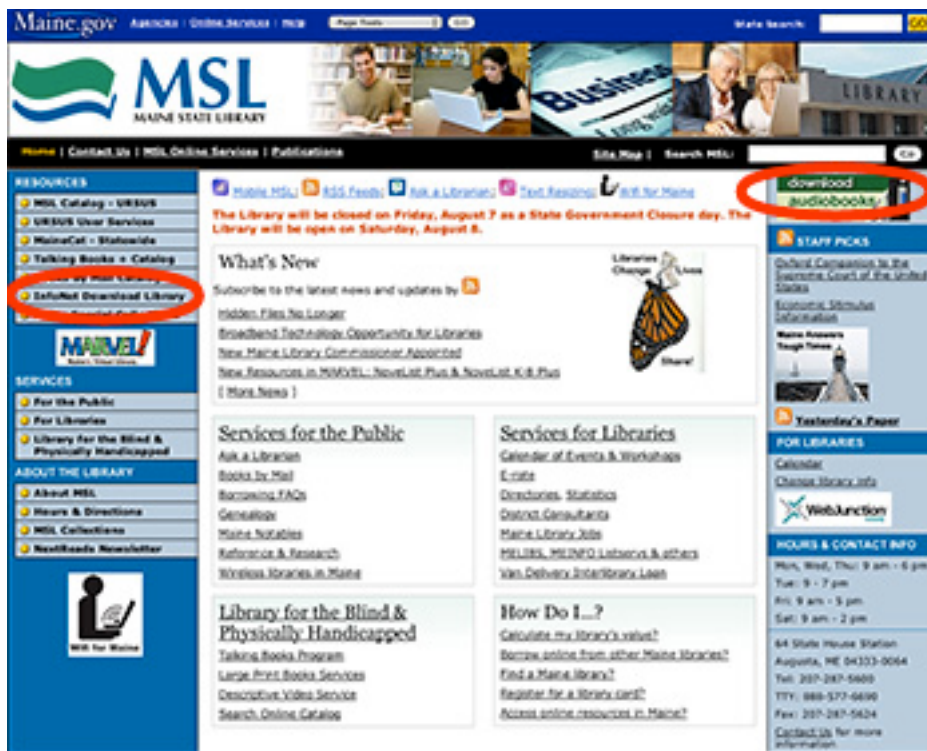
The Augusta B&N was one of the first public wireless hotspots in the capital area, but it always charged for the service. B&N's current service provider is AT&T. This has been good news for AT&T wireless subscribers, including all iPhone owners, because for this set of users service has been free. Everyone else had to pony up to log on.

Internet news sites recently reported that B&N is now offering free wi-fi to all users, and B&N's web site now proclaims "Complimentary wi-fi. No fees. No charges. Just log on." A possible reason for the new policy is B&N's launch of an electronic book service to compete with Amazon. If you're sitting in a bookstore café, feeling the vibes, maybe, with the proper encouragement, you're more likely to purchase and download an ebook. ☼

SPECIAL CAMP NEWS SHUTDOWN EDITION!

August 7, 2009 is a state shutdown day. To help deal with the budgetary shortfall, all Maine state government offices are closed for the day and all non-emergency employees, including yours truly, are furloughed without pay. What better way to spend part of the day than write and lay out this edition of CAMP News!

Download Library or Download Audiobooks as shown below:



Logitech USB Desktop Mic

The MIDL offers close to a thousand audiobooks, and the service is free to members of virtually any public library in Maine. To access the service, you choose your library from a dropdown list and enter your library card number. (If you don't belong to a local library, you can join the Maine State Library itself at no charge.) You "sign out" for titles via download, and are asked to delete titles from your computer or audio device after seven days.

Titles range from public domain to recent best sellers in all genres. My first two downloads were Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*, which I couldn't follow and stopped listening to, and Gary Schteyngart's political farce *Absurdistan*, which is more suited to my pea-brained intellect and which I am enjoying immensely.

To access the files, there are some hoops to jump through. Downloading the files requires the user to install a free application called OverDrive Media Console, which both manages the audiobooks files and implements a digital rights management scheme. The audiobooks fall into two broad categories: MP3 format and Windows Media Player ("WMP") format. The MP3 titles can play on Mac and Windows machines, can be transferred to your iTunes library or

Mac laptops and iMacs have long come equipped with built-in microphones, but that ain't the case with respect to the Powermac/Mac Pro tower configuration. For a long time I shared a USB headset with my wife when calling our son via Skype, but that was a cumbersome solution. Thankfully, the Logitech USB Desktop Mic (\$29 MSRP) turned out to be the perfect tool for the job.

The weighted base seats the mic stably on my desk, and the arm rotates up and down for optimum positioning. The on/off switch is a nice touch and glows green when in the on position. The mic comes with a long, 8' cord. There is no software to install. You may have to choose the mic as the active input device in the Sound preference pane or iChat or Skype preferences (it shows up as AK5370), but that's it.

According to Logitech, the mic filters out background noise. According to Sam, the sound quality is fine. ☺

directly to an iPod, and can be burned to CD-ROM. All the WMP files can be played on a Windows computer, but not a Mac unless the Mac is running Windows. Some WMP titles can be transferred to an iPod, but only to an iPod formatted for Windows. Burnability also depends on the title.

I was easily able to download to my Mac the two books described above, in MP3 format, and thence add them to my iTunes library and sync them to my iPod. On the Windows side, I was surprised to find that I was able to download the Overdrive Media Console and play a WMP title just fine on my aged copy of Windows 2000, which runs in Virtual PC 7 on my G5 Powermac.

Why the two formats, and the varying scope of digital rights? According to the MIDL web site, it all depends on what the authors and publishers of the various titles were willing to authorize. Although there are Mac-compatible DRM schemes for audiobooks, it looks like OverDrive chooses not to deal with them. Unfortunately for us Mac users, only 261 titles are available in MP3 format, which significantly limits the choice of audiobooks that I can put on my 'Pod. Oh, well. Time to get a Zune. (just kidding)

For audiobook addicts like me, the Maine Infonet Download Library is a real find. ☺