User Documentation

Documentation for users is an essential part of the user interface that you provide. It should be as well considered and developed as your application's user interface. Consider the audience that you address with your product and tailor the documentation to its needs. It's often useful to provide alternate types of documentation for the differing types of users who make up your audience. Beginners have different needs than expert users.

People have distinct learning styles. Some users learn by seeing, some learn by doing, some learn by hearing, and some learn through a combination of these styles. It's best to provide for the broadest possible range of learning styles. For example, including a written tutorial, a written reference manual, an on-line tutorial with visual and auditory feedback, and an on-line help system should meet the needs of nearly everyone who wants to learn to use your product. As an example of an on-line help system, you can look at Balloon Help in the Finder in system 7.0. For information on including your help system in the **Help** menu or implementing Balloon Help for your application, see the **Help Manager**.

Develop task-oriented documentation that teaches users how to accomplish the tasks that you designed your application to perform. Avoid system-oriented documentation that describes everything that your application can do rather than teaching practical skills.

It's important to use standard terminology and nontechnical language in user documentation. Do not pass on technical jargon to users and expect them to understand or like it. When you must use technical terms, be sure to define them at first occurrence, and include a glossary if your document has many specialized terms. Be consistent in your use of terminology. Make sure that messages and terms that users see on the screen match what appears in the documentation.

Apple publishes the *Apple Publications Style Guide,* which codifies the way in which Apple documentation uses language. It's a guide to writing about the Apple Desktop Interface. You can obtain this publication through APDA.

It's very important to translate all user documentation, including tutorials, on-line help, and books, when you localize your software product. Making your documentation available in a user's native language greatly enhances the usability and marketability of your product.