iWork 08 ready for scientists?

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Earlier this month, Apple announced the productivity suite iWork 08 for Macintosh users. iWork 08 includes Numbers, a new spreadsheet application and updated versions of the presentation and word processing applications Keynote and Pages. iWork runs natively (i.e. faster) on Intel Macs and can export to the Microsoft Office 2007 format (read my blog post about problems with this format for scientific publishing).

Numbers

The new spreadsheet application in iWork 08. The good mix of graphics, calculating and charting could make this a good tool to create scientific posters. I'm a longtime Freehand user for this purpose, but since further development has been stopped in favor of Adobe Illustrator, I'm looking for alternatives. Just as in Keynote and Pages, more sophisticated charting options (e.g. displaying standard deviations) are not supported. In contrast to Keynote and Pages, Numbers has no Applescript support.

Keynote

Keynote is a wonderful application for presentations and I have been using it for many years. Key new features in Keynote 08 are animations and instant alpha, an image editing tool to remove backgrounds. Highly recommended.

Pages

Pages is a good word processing application that is especially suited for graphics-rich documents. Pages 08 can track changes made in a document, and this feature is preserved when exporting to Microsoft Word format. Pages doesn't offer integration with Bibliography tools such as Endnote or Sente, and at least part of the reason is the missing programming interface that would allow third-party applications to integrate with Pages. Without bibliographic tools, Pages can't be recommended for any larger scientific text.

In summary, with the exception of Keynote, iWork is not quite ready for scientists. Adding solid bibliographic features in Pages could change all that. A 469 MB

30-day trial version version can be downloaded here. iWork costs $79 (US), €79 (EU) or £55 (UK).