Grokking OS X

Fixing the major annoyances of Mountain Lion and Mavericks, easily and painlessly

The Finder

The Finder has long been the cornerstone of OS X, controlling things like dialogs, sheets, and file management itself. OS X Leopard brought with it many improvements, making Finder.app a legitimate file management application that could seriously compete with any of the myriad of UNIX® file managers and Windows Explorer.

Features like Cover Flow (not so much a feature as a visual attaché to the following feature), Quick Look, and a refined sidebar with collapsible categories, a smart "Search For" section with preconfigured searches depending on date and type, along with categories for places, devices, and shared network items added greatly to Leopard.
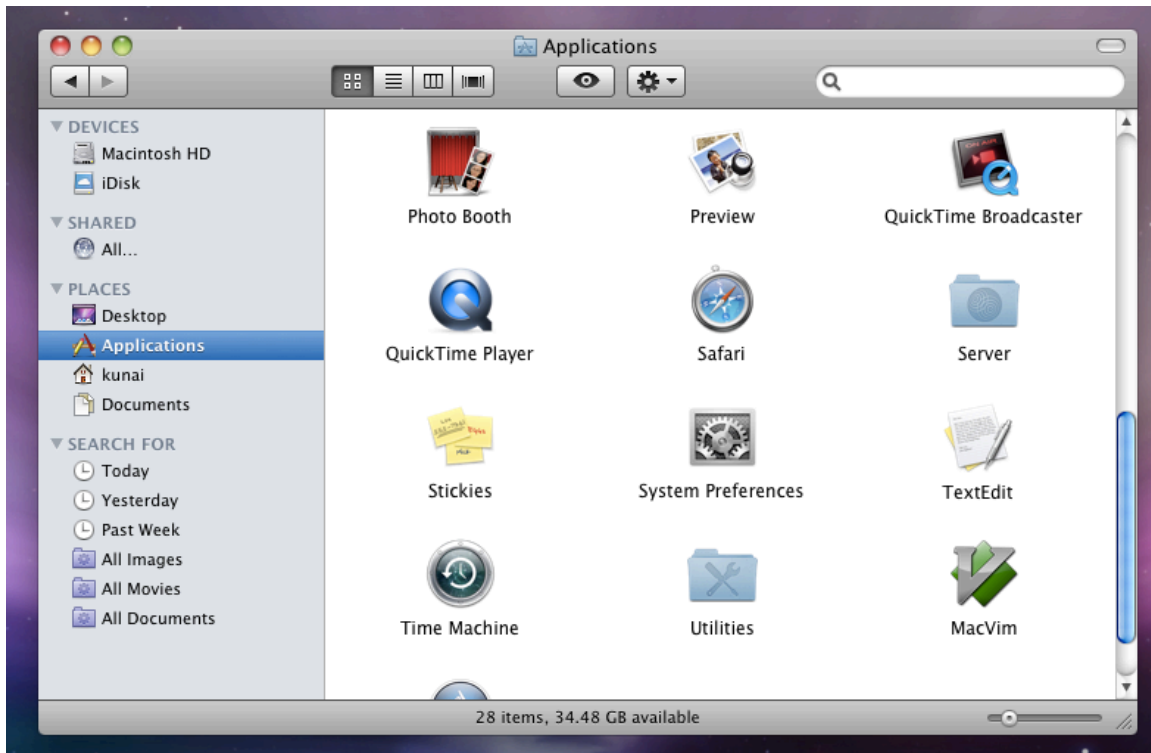
Fig. 1.0: The Finder in OS X Leopard (c. 2007)

Most of these features were left untouched in OS X 10.7-10.9, but the Finder received an (unwelcome from many users) extensive visual overhaul in OS X 10.7, with the venerable "Search For" category section completely removed and the inability to move categories around. In addition, the sidebar categories were made less lifelike and were desaturated of all color, making it more difficult to move around the various locations in the operating system.

The color is an easy fix. If you feel that the greyscale icons are cramping your style, you can pick one of three solutions:

1. **Download SideEffects, an all-in-one installer that installs the necessary components for a plugin.**
2. **Download the necessary injection code and the ColorfulSidebar plugin yourself and install manually (more stable than option 1.)**
3. **Download an application called XtraFinder and enable its plugin to restore colored sidebar icons. (most stable, but installs an extra app)**

Power users like *moi* would probably be best suited with option 2. It's not too difficult, and the extra labor pays off in the end, as you don't need any complicated installers or extraneous applications with functionality you may not want or need. Novices would

best be suited with option 1 or 3. Those who would like extra functionality and a supercharged Finder would probably enjoy option 3 the best.

Now, with color back in our sidebar, let's fix the more glaring of the issues. In OS X 10.7, the ability to move categories was removed, but this feature was added back in 10.8 and subsequently 10.9. Simply click on a category's heading and drag it up or down to move it around.
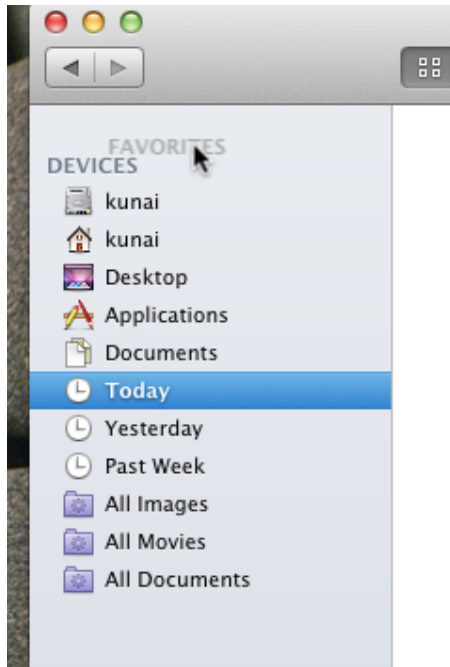
Fig. 1.1: Movin' groovin'. If you're confused by the clocks and purple folders, don't be! We'll get to that in just a second.

As you can see in Figure 1.2, we have some modifications to the standard Mountain Lion/Mavericks Finder sidebar you may have on your machine currently. The colored sidebar icons are back à la ColorfulSidebar, and we have the "Search For" smart search section, albeit without the "Search For" heading, back in the sidebar.
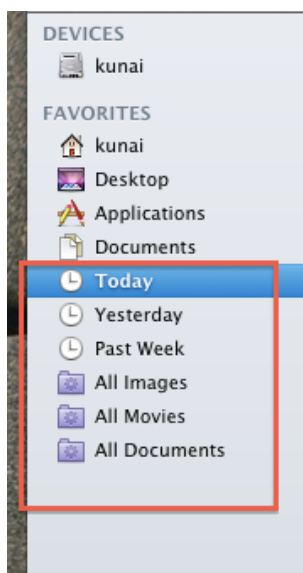
Fig. 1.2: Smart is sexy. And useful, too.

To get our smart searches back, all we have to do is create some new Smart Folders. Go ahead and hit Command-Option-N. You should see a dialog similar to Figure 1.3.
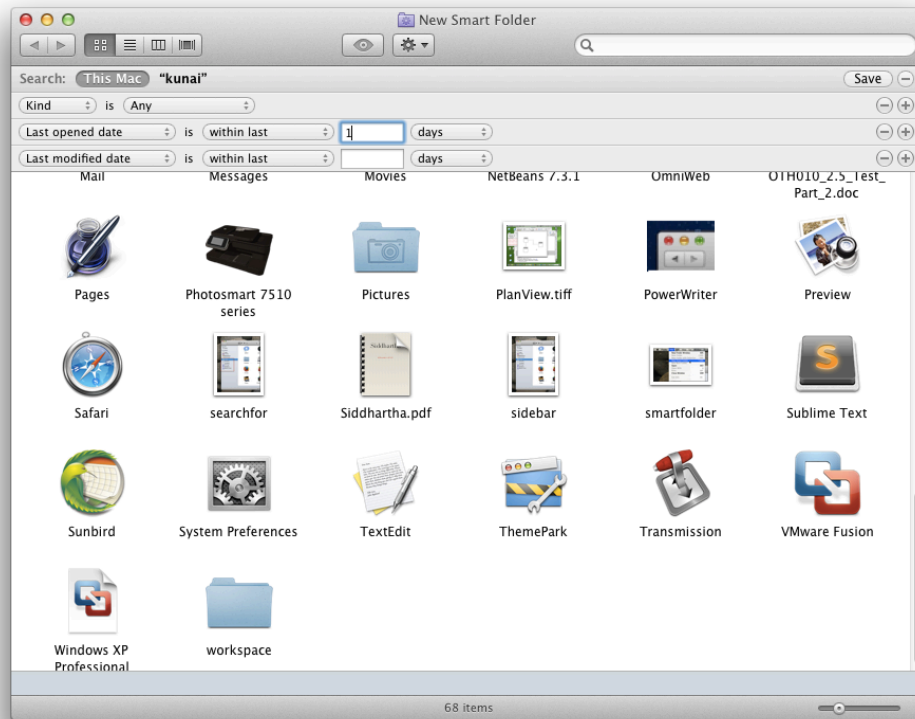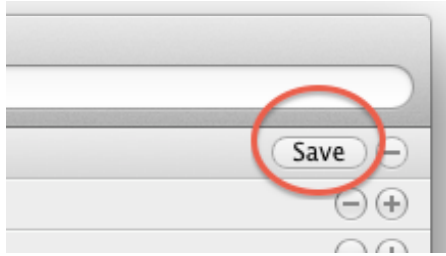

Fig. 1.3: Specifying the criteria for the smart folder "Yesterday." The Beatles would be flattered.

Clicking the "+" buttons on the context bar will bring up additional options, but for now, we're only going to go one level down the rabbit hole by pressing two "+" until we get a bar with the criteria, "Last opened date."

Let's create a smart folder analogous to the one we have in Leopard, known as Today. In the text box next to "Last opened date," we'll put 0, so that only items opened today show up.

Go ahead and hit Save, and save the smart search as "Today." Make sure the "Add smart search to Sidebar" option is selected.

If you'd like to, make a new smart folder for each of the following criteria, one of theme, or none of them:

        Yesterday:
        Kind *is* ***any***
        Last opened date *is within* 1 ***day***

        Past Week:
        Kind *is* ***any***
        Last opened date *is within* 1 ***week***

        All Images:
        Kind *is* Image

        All Movies:
        Kind *is* Movie

        All Documents:
        Kind *is* Document

After all this work, we should finally have a sidebar that is comparable to Leopard's with regards to breadth and completeness:
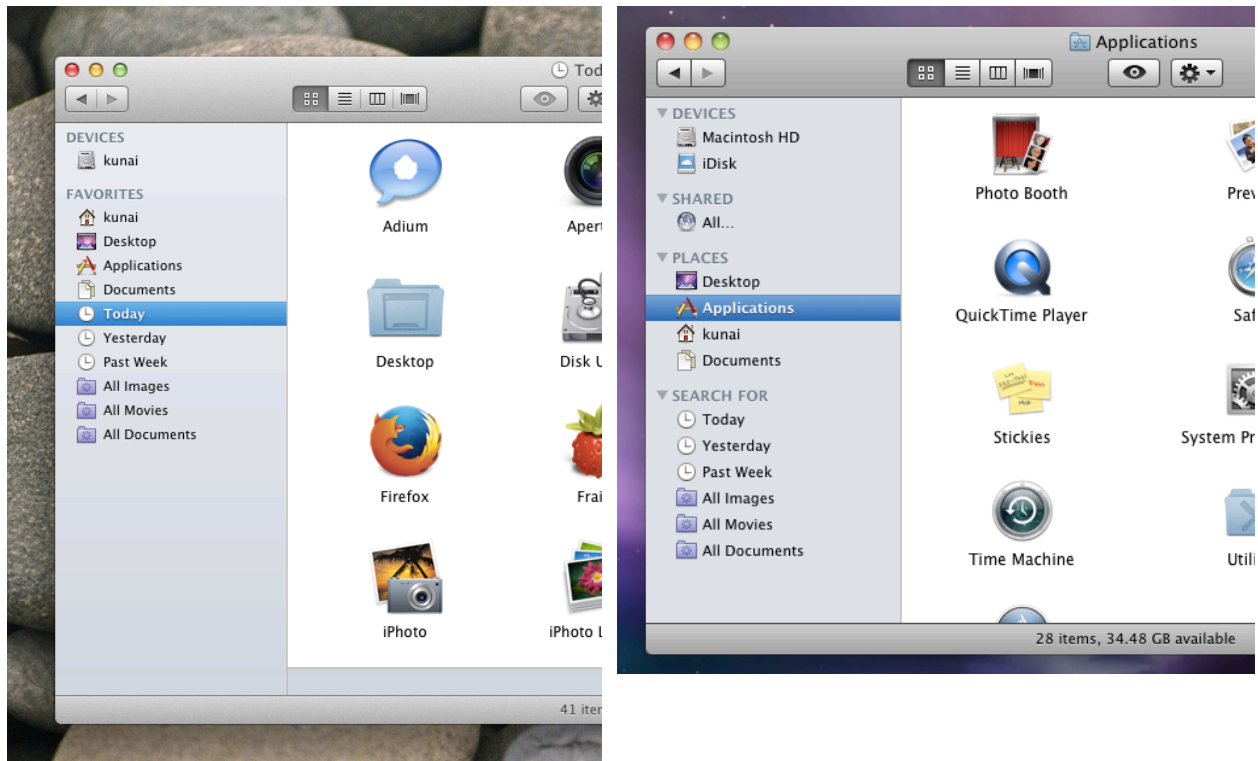
Fig. 1.5: Completed 10.8 sidebar on left, with Leopard sidebar on right. We don't have a separate "Shared" category, but that will automatically appear if we have computers or our network.