

Jason McIntosh

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Summary

I am an independent writer and software engineer based in New England.

I have been designing, implementing, and maintaining software since 1998 for [a variety of fields](#), including business, education, science, and games.

I sell my work through [Appleseed Software Consulting](#), a company that I founded in early 2008. I also help run the [Interactive Fiction Technology Foundation](#), a charitable nonprofit I co-founded in 2016.

I blog regularly at [Fogknife](#), and release side projects from time to time on my personal website, [jmac.org](#).

Employment history

January 2016 - Present

President and co-founder of the [Interactive Fiction Technology Foundation](#), a charitable 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. As head of its board, I help steer IFTF in meeting its mission of supporting the volunteer-run infrastructure of tools and services that makes the ongoing play, study, and creation of text-centric video games available and accessible.

I assist day-to-day with overseeing IFTF's various committees and programs, as well as planning the organization's upcoming goals and projects. As of 2018, I chair and manage [its accessibility project](#), and also volunteer my technical skills for its [archive](#) and [annual competition](#) programs.

October 2006 - Present

Independent software consultant, specializing in database-backed web application development, with secondary expertise in iOS consulting and development. Services I have provided for various clients have included:

- Creating web and mobile applications to spec from scratch, co-designing them with clients to fit their specific needs
- Maintaining and further developing organizations' existing web-based applications
- Analyzing and reporting on the status of clients' existing technology, and recommending future directions and investments, given their goals
- Joining an active web or mobile project's existing team as a temporary consulting resource, contributing requested, discrete features as needed to the project's code or assets
- Generally assisting with longer-term technology planning and goal-setting

For web development, I typically work with [Catalyst](#)-based applications, using [Modern Perl](#) techniques on the back end, and building a responsive user interface from HTML, CSS, and JavaScript / jQuery. For iOS work, I use Apple's various development tools and resources, especially Xcode.

Ultimately I use whatever tools are most appropriate to the task at hand, learning new languages and technologies when appropriate.

Through collaborative tools such as GitHub, I actively contribute to [CPAN](#), the Perl community's shared repository of code libraries and language extensions. My name appears on the contributors list of important modules such as [DBIx::Class](#).

In February 2008, I incorporated [Appleseed Software Consulting \(www.appleseed-sc.com\)](#), and now operate as its head consultant.

January 2014 - December 2017

Organizer of [the Annual Interactive Fiction Competition](#).

Over the course of 2014, I redesigned the web-based infrastructure and policies defining this yearly showcase for non-commercial, independently produced, text-based video games. That year saw the most entries for the competition in its 20-year history, as well as [coverage in the international press](#).

For the subsequent three years I organized every aspect of the competition's annual cycle, including gathering entries, receiving judges' votes, archiving the entries afterwards, and answering public and participant questions throughout. In the 2016 and 2017 competitions, I also began organizing and directing volunteer teams to assist with specific aspects of running the competition.

I passed along the organizer role at the end of 2017, and continue to help IFComp by maintaining its server and web software.

September 2005 - December 2015

Independent commercial game designer, publisher, and games-studies researcher. This took a few different forms:

- I guest-lectured on games studies in venues ranging from online courses on games education to MIT classes in comparative media studies.
- During the fall 2011 semester, I worked in this capacity as an adjunct lecturer at [Northeastern University's Creative Industries program](#). I taught the lab counterpart to Brian Sullivan's "Games and Society" course to a class of 100 students, [exposing them to as wide a range of digital and tabletop games](#) as possible in ten weeks, and challenging them to look critically at games and their design. The work included the planning and execution of every aspect of the course.
- I ran Orangepeel Softworks, the game-publishing arm of my main business identity, Appleseed Software Consulting (described below). Under this brand, I researched, implemented and published various games and game-related tools for the iOS mobile platform (including iPhone and iPad). These are no longer available, but [I did publish the source code](#) of its most significant project.
- I edited and contributed to [The Gameshelf \(gameshelf.jmac.org\)](#), an independent blog and video series on the topic of game criticism. Chief contributions include "[Jmac on Games](#)", a series of critical written essays, and "[Gameshelf TV](#)", an occasional video series about games outside of mainstream perception.

January 2014 - April 2014

Quality Assurance lead for [Transcendence: Origins](#), a narrative-game prologue to the Warner Brothers motion picture *Transcendence*.

This project was conceived, commissioned, assembled and shipped under a heroically tight schedule – and succeeded, thanks to a tiny, amazing team that pulled it all together despite all the bug reports, feature requests, and story suggestions I filed.

September 2005 - February 2011

President and founder of [Volity Games](#), a startup that focused on the study, critique, and improvement of online multiplayer games.

Projects developed and launched in this role included [Volity](#), an open platform for multiplayer casual games, and [Planbeast](#), a service that helped fans of various online games connect with one another and schedule times to play. I also oversaw the launch of [The Volity Network](#), a limited implementation of Volity.

As president, my principal roles involved managing our projects' technological development, as well as overseeing the operation of the company. My technical tasks included maintaining the software and the machines that run all of our public services. I was also responsible for all of our websites' design, text, and general operation.

Volity Games's projects made use of a great deal of open technologies supplementary to the modern web. Volity used [Jabber \(XMPP\)](#), [SVG](#), and [ECMAScript](#), while Planbeast used [iCalendar](#) and [REST](#)-based APIs.

July 2002 - September 2005

Senior Bioinformatics Programmer for the [Institute of Chemistry and Cell Biology](#) at Harvard Medical School in Boston. I played a key role in the development of ChemBank, a web-based application that allowed chemists and biologists to store, review, and analyze the results of high-throughput screening experiments.

During this period, I co-authored a second book for O'Reilly, [Mac OS X in a Nutshell](#).

October 2001 - July 2002

Self-employed as a freelance writer and computer consultant. During this period, I co-authored the book *Perl and XML* (see [Publications](#)), and wrote articles on Mac OS X for the [O'Reilly Network](#) online magazine.

When not writing, I worked as a freelance software consultant, crafting dynamic websites using [Mason](#).

November 2000 - October 2001

Software tools specialist for [O'Reilly & Associates, Inc.](#) (now O'Reilly Media) in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I maintained and created software that helped the company publish its books, both in print and in its more recent strides to publish online, with XML as the vehicle of choice in all cases. My work environment was primarily Perl on Unix.

My largest project was a bundle of Perl modules and programs that converted [DocBook XML](#) documents to Adobe FrameMaker files and back again. In fact, just about all my projects involved folding, spindling and mutilating DocBook documents in one way or another - much of my other interesting work involved working on the software that prepares O'Reilly book files for [Safari](#), a service that makes book content available on the Web.

December 1998 - October 2000

Programmer for The Maine InternetWorks Inc. (MINT), an Internet and network service provider in central Maine. I helped develop and maintain a variety of software, largely web-based applications, for use both in house and by MINT's customers. Tools used for all projects were almost exclusively the [Perl](#) programming language and the SQL database standard as implemented by [MySQL](#).

I was responsible for the development of MINT's first attempts at online commerce, as well as a web-based application server using the [Apache](#) web server and its [mod_perl](#) module.

While in this position, I developed familiarity and then advocacy for [open-source software](#); MINT used [Linux](#) as its primary operating system for its servers and internal workstations, and all its mission-critical applications were open source as well.

October 1997 - November 1998

Educational Technician and Assistant to the Director of Technology for the town of [Hermon, Maine's](#) school and Information Services departments. Assisted in the management of the town's freenet ISP, and coordinated the technology-related inventory and curriculum for its three schools and adult education programs.

I developed and maintained integrated, web-based information management solutions with [UserLand Frontier](#) and [FileMaker Pro](#), used by both the school department and local municipal entities and businesses.

I also performed tech support for the schools when the need arose.

July 1996 - September 1997

Sales and purchasing manager at Technology Source (also variously known as Computer World, Maine Advanced Computer Systems, and Honest ABE's Computers), a computer sales and service shop in Bangor, Maine. Required an expertise of personal computer, network and Internet use, specializing in Macs and compatibles and their related operating systems and applications, in order to act as a consultant as well as a salesperson for the shop's customer base of (at the time of my resignation) 3,000 home and business users.

May 1995 - February 1996

City Editor for the [University of Maine's](#) semi-weekly, student-run newspaper, The Maine Campus. Was responsible for each issue's local news content, and recruiting, supervising and giving assignments to the paper's staff writers.

February 1995 - July 1996

News Clerk at the [Bangor Daily News](#). Assisted editors and writers on production evenings by writing outlines, researching names, sizing photographs, and running courier duties and other odd tasks.

March 1994 - May 1995

News Editor for the The Maine Campus. Used Macs to design the layout of each issue's front page and news sections, write headlines and cutlines, and select and edit stories from wire services to use in each issue. Also trained, over time, five other Campus editors on layout for their respective sections.

September 1991 - January 1994

Consulting Assistant with [UMaine](#)'s "MacAct" program, which leased Macintosh computers to on-campus students. Installed Macs in dormitory rooms each September and spent the rest of the academic year as a full-time system and network use instructor and consultant for the program's users.

Independent projects and publications

Software

[BumpySkies](#) is a clear-air turbulence forecaster for commercial air travel over the continental United States. Created over the course of 2016. I continue to actively maintain it.

[Plerd](#) is a minimalist static-website generator I created for the sake of my own blogging. [It is open-source software](#), with public contributions.

Games

[The Warbler's Nest](#) is a short work of interactive fiction I wrote in 2010. It received that year's [XYZZY Award](#) for Best Story, and a nomination for Best Game.

[Sixis](#) is a 2012 iPad adaptation of a commercial card game designed by Chris Cieslik and published by [Asmadi Games](#).

[Barbetween](#) is an experimental art installation I created in 2014. It exists within [Seltani](#), an online, multiplayer narrative-exploration space.

The McFarlane Job is a short crime story told over a psuedo-SMS interface, with the player coordinating communications among a small team to pull off a heist. I wrote and released it in 2015 under contract with [House of Cool](#), using their design platform called [Massively](#).

Books

Mac OS X in a Nutshell, co-authored with Chuck Toporek and Chris Stone, originally published in 2003 by O'Reilly & Associates, Inc., with more recent editions published in 2004 and 2005. A deep reference to Apple Computer's Mac OS X operating system.

Perl & XML, co-authored with Erik T. Ray, published in 2002 by O'Reilly & Associates, Inc. A book about processing XML with the Perl programming language.

Videos

From 2005 through 2010, I produced [a series of videos for The Gameshelf](#), highlighting aspects of games and game culture outside of mainstream knowledge. Highlights include a 30-minute, reality-show styled overview of the board game *Diplomacy*, and a 10-minute summary of modern interactive fiction.

In October 2010, I produced [a very short promotional video](#) for a colleague's use of Kickstarter to fund a new game project. It met its fundraising goal within its first 24 hours online.

Technology Skills

Most of my information technology experience involves using the magic [LAMP](#) platform - [Linux](#), [Apache](#), [MySQL](#) and [Perl](#) - to create dynamic, database-driven websites. I am also experienced with using [XML](#) to organize and transform documents and data, with particular skill in using Perl and XML together.

I am an expert with the Perl programming language, which I have used nearly every day since 1998. Through Perl, I regularly process plain text (such as logs and config files), HTML/XHTML/CSS web pages, SQL databases, images, web services through SOAP or XML-RPC, and just about anything else I need to do with information crunching.

My recent entrepreneurial experiences with Volity Games have provided me with deep knowledge of the XMPP messaging protocol, the SVG vector graphics standard, and manipulation of the XML DOM via ECMAScript (a.k.a JavaScript). The Volity Network is largely based on Perl libraries and programs I wrote that must handle all of these technologies, and which are publicly available on the CPAN. Volity has further required me to keep my Java programming skills reasonably sharp to assist with development of [Gamut](#), Volity's client application.

My years of experience have also given me flexibility with picking up entirely new programming languages, learning new ones when the task at hand requires it. For example, I learned [C#](#) while studying software development targeting the Xbox game console, and [Inform 7](#) while working with modern interactive fiction.

In short: I've been doing this for a long time, and I've gotten good at deciding when it's time to learn a new technology, at which point I do so quickly and competently.

As far as coding style goes, I consider myself a stickler for maintainability, no matter what language I work in. I always err on the side of legibility and clarity, maximizing the chance that another developer (including myself-in-the-future) will be able to work with my code without pain. I write documentation and permanent regression tests as I go, and insist using version control (such as Subversion or Git) wherever possible, whether I am working alone or as part of a team.

Education

May 1996

Graduated from the [University of Maine](#) with bachelor's degrees in journalism and English.

As a student at UMaine, I received a four-year presidential scholarship, as well as an additional \$1,000 scholarship from the [Maine Press Association](#).

References

References available upon [request](#).