

# 4 ONLINE: THE NET AS COMPUTER

By Lisa Schmeiser



great place to store the stuff you get done.” One of the keys to this hybridized world of online and local apps is data synchronization. Right now, it’s one area in which Apple could dramatically improve.

➔ Browser-based services—such as Google’s Gmail and Yahoo’s Flickr—are becoming increasingly sophisticated and usable alternatives to the applications and data storage that now reside on your Mac. Because they’re online, your apps and data are always available from anywhere, no matter what device you use to access them. But will they replace the programs on your Mac? Not likely.

## Office 2.0

When Yahoo began offering e-mail accounts ten years ago, it became one of the first occupants of what’s becoming known as Office 2.0. Since then, dozens of other Web-based apps and data-storage services have moved in. (For a sampling of what’s available, see “The Online Software Suite”; for a full list, see [macworld.com/2283](http://macworld.com/2283)).

However, these online applications aren’t without their drawbacks. For starters, they demand a speedy, reliable Net connection. If the connection is slow or intermittent, the application could time out. And even if you have a blazing-fast Net connection, these apps can feel slow. “The interfaces of Web-based apps are going to be slower than the desktop applications you’re used to,” admits 37 Signals’ Jason Fried. Also, they require a certain leap of faith. You’ll need to be concerned about the security of your data and the stability of your vendors. “You must trust that they will protect your data and remain in business long enough to serve your needs,” says Ismael Chang Ghalimi, CEO of Intaglio and founder of the Office 2.0 conference.

For these and other reasons, it’s likely that online apps will supplement your Mac’s apps rather than render them moot. Ghalimi says that no matter how good online apps get, users will still likely want to synchronize data between them and their desktops (or, for mobile users, between the online apps and their smart phones and laptops).

Fried agrees: “I think there will be some applications that work better online and some that work better on a desktop. It’s just a matter of what works best for you.” He cites Apple’s iTunes as an example of

how people may eventually move between online and offline apps: the application pulls data from the Web, yet also lets users work with assets stored on a local drive. “The desktop is still a great place to get work done,” he says. “The Internet is a

## Buying Advice

Don’t go tossing Apple’s iLife or Microsoft Office. But if you haven’t already done so, you should certainly try out browser-based services, such as the ones we list in “The Online Software Suite” (and on [macworld.com/2283](http://macworld.com/2283)), to see whether they can complement the apps you have on your Mac.

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## THE ONLINE SOFTWARE SUITE

There are dozens of Office 2.0 apps available. Here are some you should check out; for a full listing, go to [macworld.com/2283](http://macworld.com/2283).

APPLICATION TYPE	OFFICE 2.0 APPLICATIONS
<b>Calendars</b>	30 Boxes, <a href="http://www.30boxes.com">www.30boxes.com</a> Google Calendar (beta), <a href="http://calendar.google.com">calendar.google.com</a> HipCal, <a href="http://www.hipcal.com">www.hipcal.com</a>
<b>Desktop Publishers</b>	gOffice, <a href="http://www.goffice.com">www.goffice.com</a>
<b>Drawing Programs</b>	LithaPaint, <a href="http://www.litha-paint.com">www.litha-paint.com</a>
<b>E-mail Clients</b>	Gmail, <a href="http://www.gmail.com">www.gmail.com</a> Hotmail, <a href="http://www.hotmail.com">www.hotmail.com</a> Mailroom, <a href="http://www.mailroom.com">www.mailroom.com</a> Yahoo Mail, <a href="http://mail.yahoo.com">mail.yahoo.com</a>
<b>File Managers</b>	Backback, <a href="http://www.37signals.com">www.37signals.com</a> Dropload, <a href="http://www.dropload.com">www.dropload.com</a> DropSend, <a href="http://www.dropsend.com">www.dropsend.com</a> OmniDrive, <a href="http://www.omnidrive.com">www.omnidrive.com</a> XmailHardDrive, <a href="http://www.xmailharddrive.com">www.xmailharddrive.com</a> YouSendIt, <a href="http://www.yousendit.com">www.yousendit.com</a>
<b>Instant-Messaging Clients</b>	Campfire, <a href="http://www.37signals.com">www.37signals.com</a> Gabbly, <a href="http://www.gabbly.com">www.gabbly.com</a>
<b>Music Players</b>	AjaxTunes, <a href="http://www.ajax13.com">www.ajax13.com</a> Jinzora, <a href="http://www.jinzora.com">www.jinzora.com</a>
<b>Office Suites</b>	Joyent Connector, <a href="http://www.joyent.com">www.joyent.com</a> Zoho Office Suite, <a href="http://www.zoho.com">www.zoho.com</a>
<b>Outliners</b>	Gliffy (beta), <a href="http://www.gliffy.com">www.gliffy.com</a> Mayomi, <a href="http://www.mayomi.com">www.mayomi.com</a>
<b>Photo Managers</b>	Flickr, <a href="http://www.flickr.com">www.flickr.com</a> Phixr, <a href="http://www.phixr.com">www.phixr.com</a> PXN8, <a href="http://www.pxn8.com">www.pxn8.com</a>
<b>Spreadsheets</b>	ajaxXLS, <a href="http://www.ajax13.com">www.ajax13.com</a> Google Spreadsheets (beta), <a href="http://spreadsheets.google.com">spreadsheets.google.com</a> gOffice Spreadsheets, <a href="http://www.goffice.com">www.goffice.com</a>
<b>Word Processors</b>	AjaxWrite, <a href="http://www.ajax13.com">www.ajax13.com</a> Google Docs (beta), <a href="http://docs.google.com">docs.google.com</a>