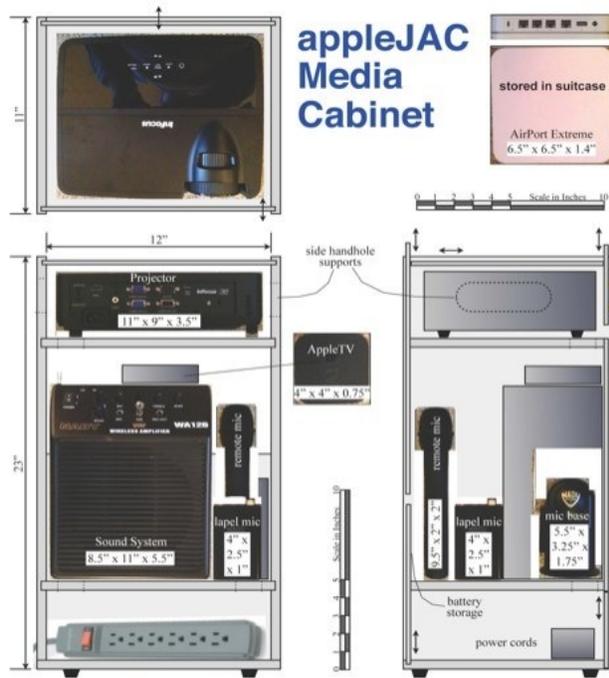# AUG Media Integration: appleJAC Media Cabinet
by Tom Piper, aJMUG President

Quality sight and sound are very important at any meeting of an Apple user group so that the membership can get the most benefit from technology presentations. We found that, with the increasing age of our attendees, amplified sound and large bright screens are vital to our success, but setup can be complicated and time-consuming before a meeting, and frustrating at the end, when everyone wants to leave.

Over a considerable length of time, our appleJAC Macintosh Users Group (formed in 1984) has assembled a considerable amount of audio/visual equipment to support our meetings. In addition to our InFocus digital projector connected to an AppleTV (for wireless iDevice and Mac presentations), we also have a Nady wireless amp/speaker with wireless lapel and handheld microphones, all of which require a bunch of 1/8" audio, HDMI video, power blocks, connector cables and power strip. Our AirPort Extreme was also part of the system. Installation and adjustment would often take up to a half hour to get everything working, making sure the volume for the mics and computer input was balanced, and video image squared and full screen. Too often, repacking afterwards was rushed and chaotic, with little organization for storage, thus complicating the next setup.

My aJMUG Vice-President and I decided that this disorganized problem required an integrated solution which I designed (with his advice), and he built (with my assistance). Our concept was to have one box on top of which the projector could be mounted, with the speaker and all other parts attached underneath. We wanted it to be compact and portable, with everything installed and connected permanently so that setup only required sitting it on a tabletop and plugging in the power cord. For safe transport and storage, we also wanted

protective panels and doors to fully enclose the contents when not in use. Design went through many phases before we were fully satisfied.

The final product became almost a two cubic foot box (13"W x 24"H x 11"D) made of pine with sliding masonite panels on the front, back and top for safe storage. With a bit of stain and acrylic overcoat (plus rubber skid-proof feet), we had a two shelf cabinet which house all of our A/V equipment, with storage for batteries and a few extras, all powered by a single power cord. The overall construction cost was less than $40 using basic wood shop equipment.

This Media Cabinet is a little heavy, but easily stored in a large wheeled suitcase along with extension cords and some meeting extras. This makes storage and security between meetings simple and effective, while setup is quick and easy by taking the cabinet out of the suitcase, sitting it on a table, sliding out three cover panels, and plugging it in, regardless of the location. The biggest adjustment is focusing the screen while the sound levels (two separate mics and external sound from the projector).

Connecting Macs, iPads and iPhones via AirPlay to the AppleTV is a breeze, and changing presenters is also fast, with sound automatically fed to the projector via the HDMI connection to the AppleTV (the sound-out jack on the projector is connected to the amp/speakers). The Media Cabinet retains all of our connections so almost anyone can help setup this system for meetings (it doesn't require a techie), which relieves the minds of many of our volunteers.

For more information, feel free to contact us at applejac@mac.com. We've been using this integrated Media Cabinet now for over a year with excellent results and appreciative meeting attendees.