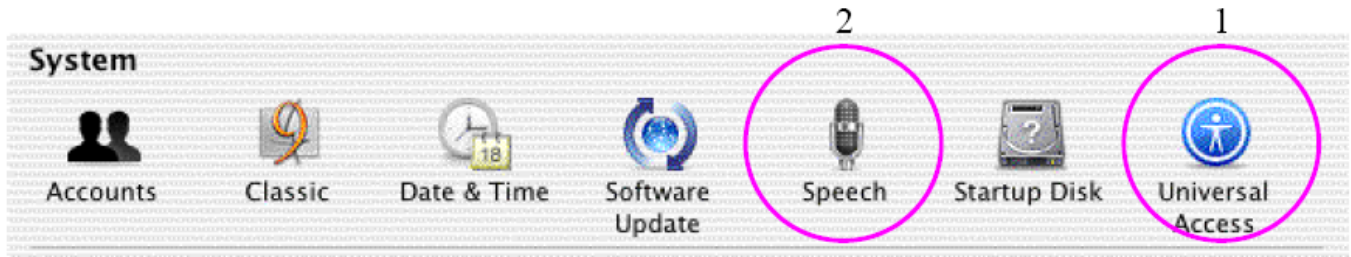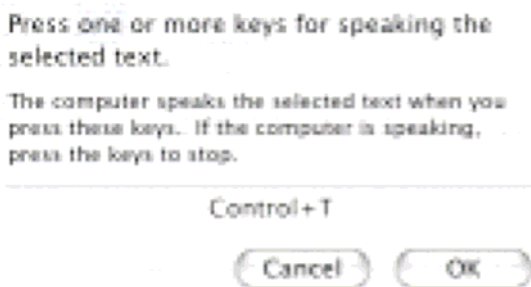# Text-to-Speech in Mac OS X

Macintoshes have for years been able to "speak" text in their built-in programs, SimpleText (Mac OS 7.5–9.x) and TextEdit (OS X). Getting your (pre-OS X) Mac to speak whatever text you could highlight required additional (free) software called HearIt! which is still available from ftp://ftp.mesd.k12.or.us/pub/mac/HearIt.sit.bin

OS X can speak any text, in any application, without extra software. Just highlight the text and hit the hotkey combination as you did in HearIt! But first you have to enable text-to-speech and give it a hotkey command. It's easy—two steps—both in System Preferences:

Step 1: **System Preferences > Universal Access**
Make sure "Enable Access For Assistive Devices" is selected

Step 2: **System Preferences > Speech**
Click the "Spoken User Interface" tab
Select "Selected Text When The Key Is Pressed"
Hit the Change Key button to specify a hotkey combo.

(I'm used to the default hotkeys in HearIt!., control-t, so I use that.)

Then hit OK and try it out!

For a free text-to-speech option in the Windows world, use ReadPlease.2003, from www.readplease.com. The good news, besides it being free, is that ReadPlease is multilingual: you can download six other languages for it, including Spanish, French, and German. The bad news is that to get text read, you have to copy it into the ReadPlease window and hit play. To get text spoken on the fly with highlighting and hotkey, you need the commercial version. (Mac OS X text-to-speech is inexplicably monolingual, but text-to-speech in earlier versions of Mac OS can be made bilingual with a free download of two Mexican Spanish voices.)