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iChat to MSN Through Jabber

Posted on Friday, May 6th, 2005 at 2:56 pm under Mac Geekery, Tutorials.

The latest version of the Mac OS X known as Tiger brings Jabber support to iChat which indirectly supports other messaging protocols like MSN, ICQ, AIM and IRC.

What is Jabber and why do I care?

Jabber is an open alternative to consumer IM services. Unlike these commercial services, Jabber is a decentralized network. It works similar to email servers in which anyone can download the Jabber server application and run it in their server to offer Jabber. Because of this, there is no global username, there is unique usernames on each server thus you can have multiple jabber accounts on different servers. The username is in the form of an email address. So, if I get a jabber account at jabberserverx.com then my jabber username would be myusername@jabberserverx.com. Each Jabber server can be configured differently to offer support for MSN, ICQ, AIM, IRC, Yahoo, Email Gateway and even File Transfer. You can find a grid of the Jabber servers and its supported protocols here. Why should you care about this? You should care because it's open, free and it's seems to be the only way to bring Yahoo and MSN Messenger into iChat.

Step 1: Get your account set up

If you don't have an MSN or Yahoo account, you need to create one. A hotmail account could be used for MSN. Create an MSN account at passport.net.

Step 2: Get a Jabber Client App

Since iChat has only basic support for Jabber, you need a Jabber Client Application to create a Jabber account. We're going to use Psi, one of many Jabber Client Applications.

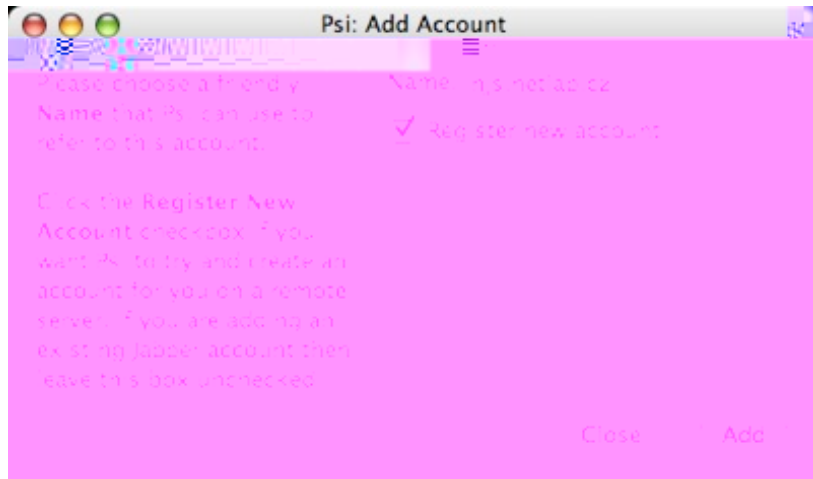Go to PSI's website psi.affinix.com and select the Mac OS version of PSI and the mirror server closest to you.
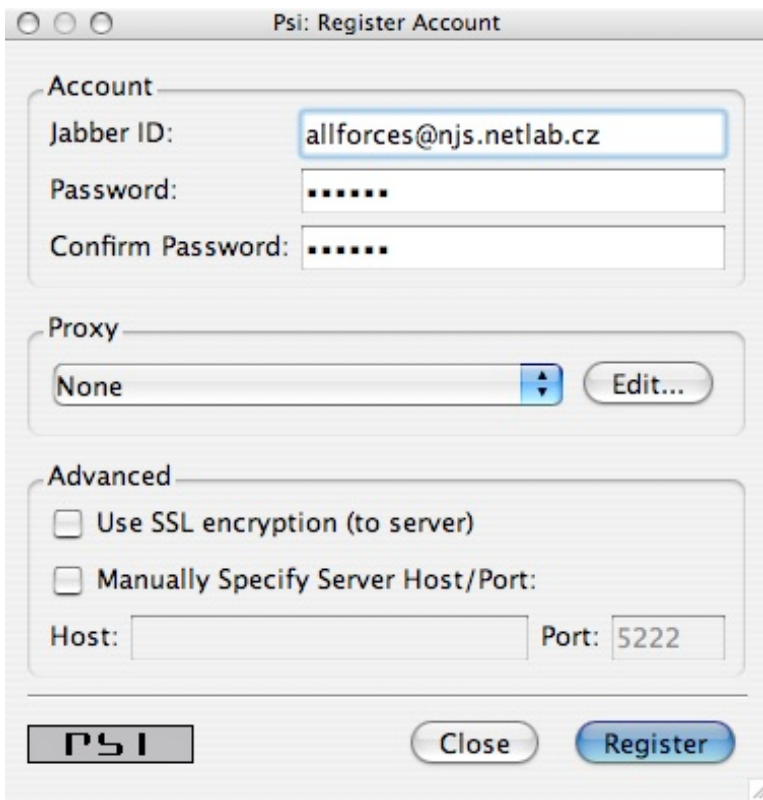
Download it, drag to you Applications folder and launch.

Step 3: Create a Jabber Account

Enter njs.netlab.cz (some people are reporting a more stable connection with jabber.freenet.de)as your Jabber server. This is a server from the Czech Republic that supports the protocols we need. To find other servers, Jabber.org provides a list of servers you can choose from.
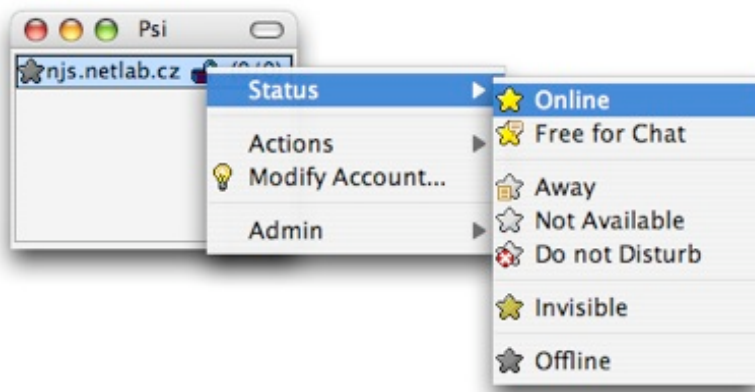

Enter your desired account info. Notice how it looks just like if it was an email address for that server. If the username is taken, it will let you know. Click on Register to continue.
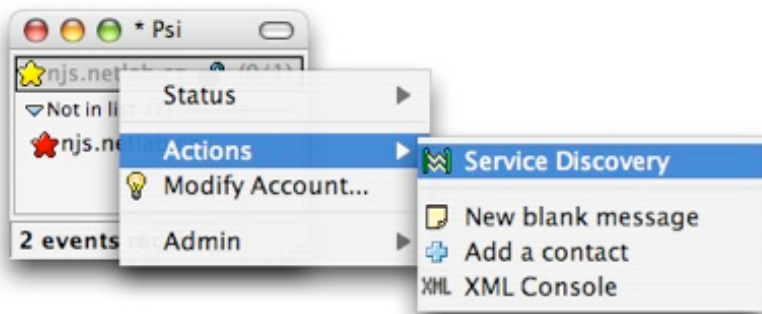
Upon success, click OK.

Use Control + Click to get the contextual menu from the server's name and make your status Online.
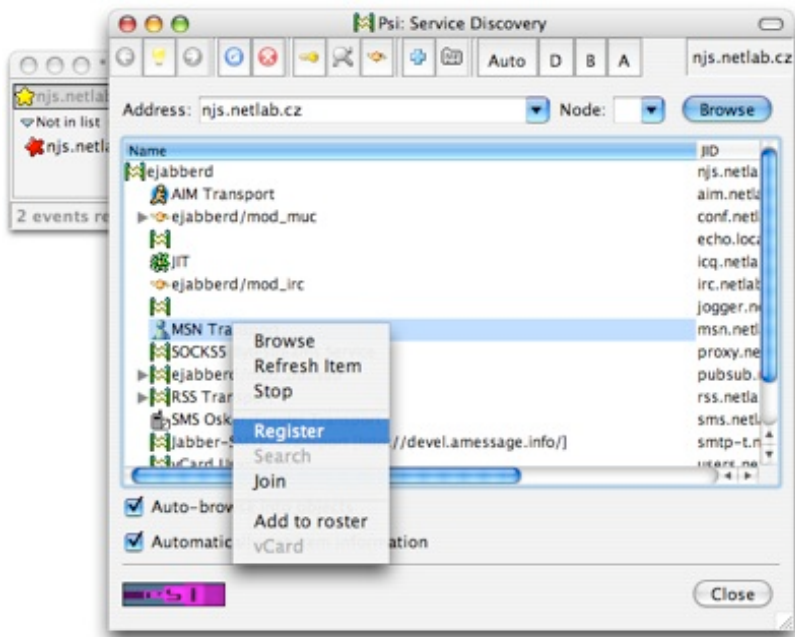

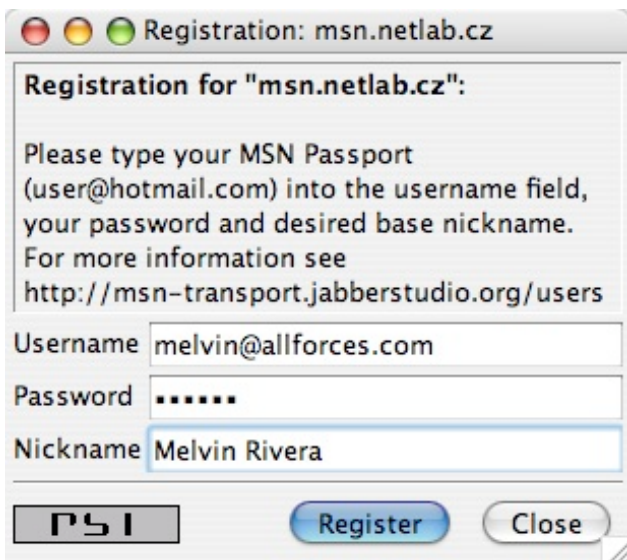**Step 4: Register your IM Service with your Jabber server**

Use Control + Click to get the contextual menu from the server's name and select Service Discovery.

From the Service Directory window, Use Control + Click to get the contextual menu from the desired Service and select Register.

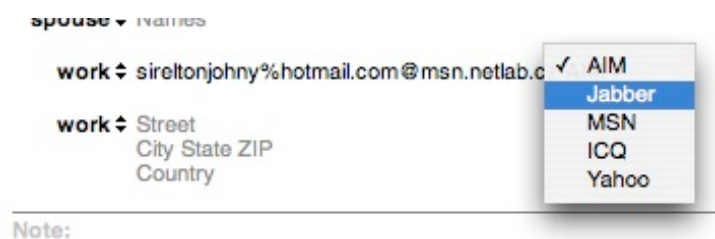Enter your IM service login info. In this case, I'm entering my MSN Messenger login info.

Once completed. Quit Psi and Launch Address Book.

Step 5: Add Jabber formated usernames to Address Book

First, you need to know someone who has an MSN or Yahoo Messenger account. From Address Book create or edit a user and add a new IM username. Make sure you specify Jabber from the pulldown menu and replace their @ symbol with a % sign.
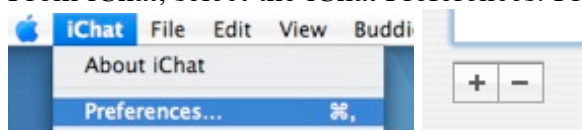
msn account name:
sireltonjohny@hotmail.com

jabber address format
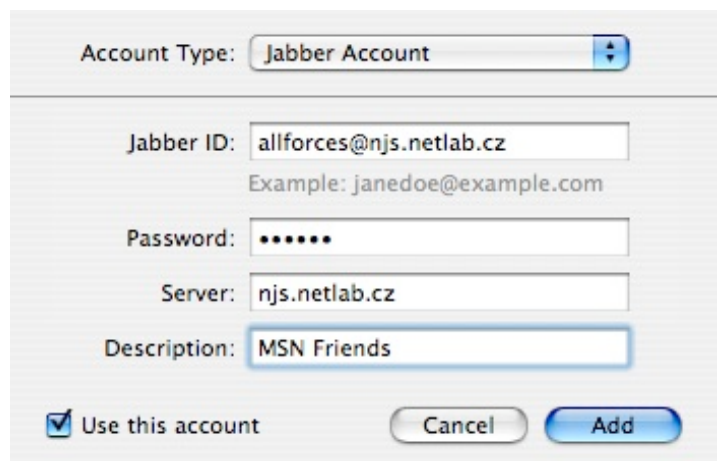sireltonjohny%hotmail.com@msn.netlab.cz

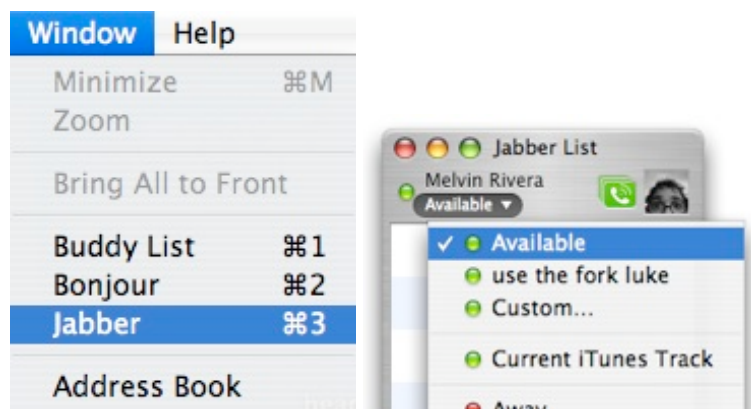## Step 6: Set up iChat for Jabber

From iChat, select the iChat Preferences. From the Accounts Panel, click add to Add a new Account.
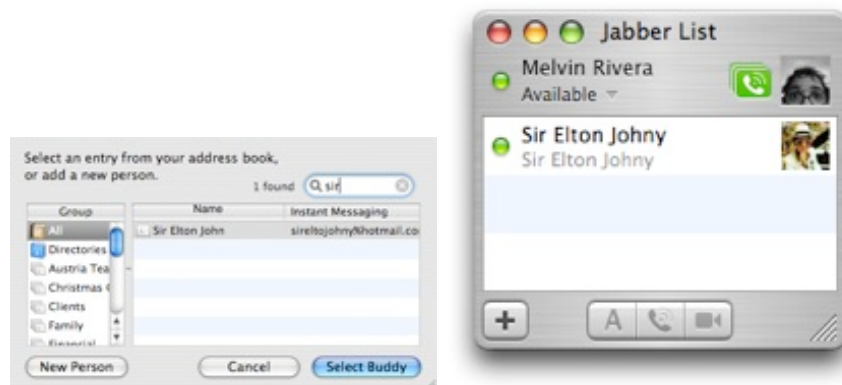

Enter your Jabber account info.

Once the account is created. Select Jabber from the Window pulldown menu and make your Jabber status Available from the Jabber Buddy List.

From the Jabber Buddy List, Add a new buddy by clicking add button. It should find the Buddy we added earlier in the Address Book.

Search for your friend by typing their name on the search field then click on Select Buddy.

Done. You should now be able to chat with people on MSN Messenger right from iChat.

Conclusion

The simplicity of having only one IM application is priceless. And although there great Apps that combine the services I prefer the iLife integration of the Apple applications. The only downer is that file transfers are not available through this setup. It would be safe to assume video is neither but I have not tried it myself.

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1. *paul* Says:
   May 6th, 2005 at 4:55 pm

   AWESOME! You rock man. It will be so nice to be able to use iChat instead of MSN Messanger.