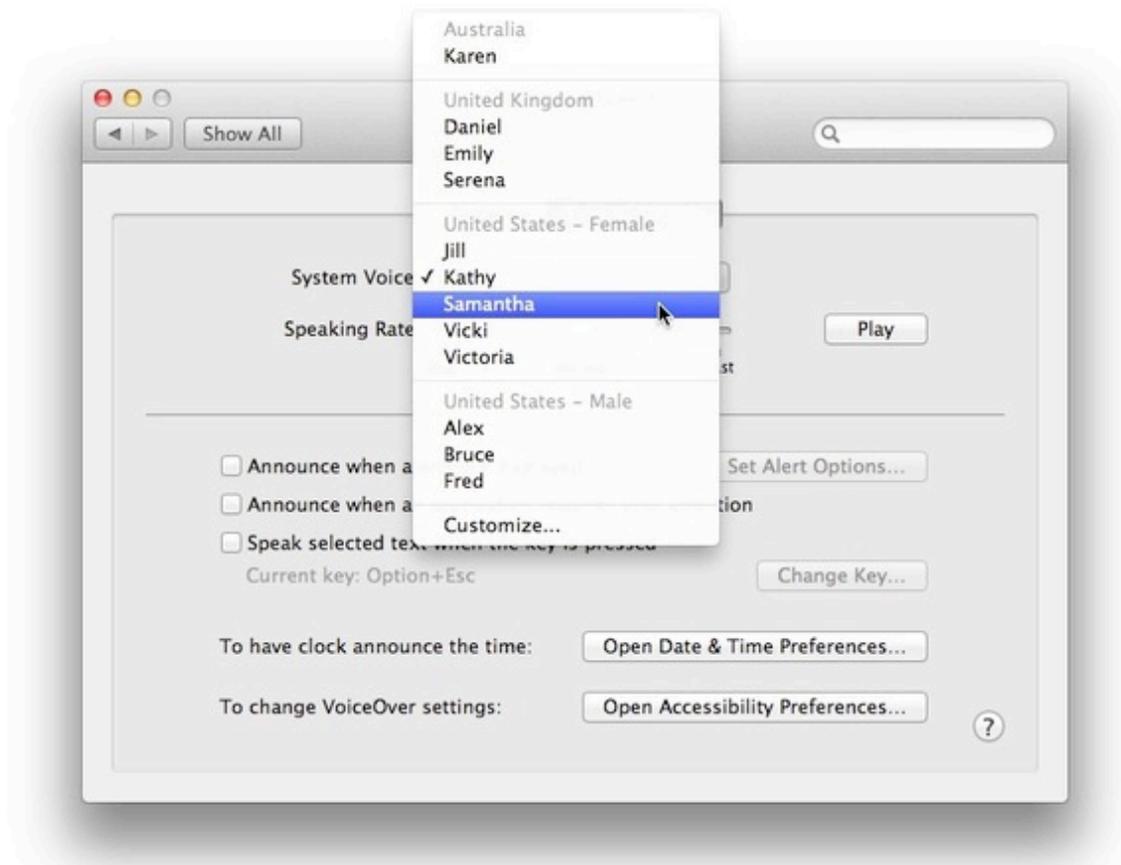


Text to Speech

Text to Speech is another easy-to-use feature built into Mountain Lion. Again, launch System Preferences, choose Dictation & Speech, and click on the Text to Speech tab. In the area below you'll find options for choosing a voice (Alex is selected by default in the United States) and adjusting the speaking rate. You can additionally choose to have system alerts announced, have your Mac tell you when an application needs your attention, and speak selected text when you press a particular key combination (Option-Escape is the default). If you like, you can also ask that your Mac to announce the time.

The one area of interest here is the Speaking Voice pop-up menu. Alex is the default because, for those in the U.S., it's the most natural sounding voice. Just click the Play button to hear a sample. If you click on the Speaking Voice menu you see that you can choose from a number of different voices. Both the Bruce and Fred voices sound very "computery" as does the Kathy voice (the Vicki and Victoria voices are better, but not entirely natural sounding).



You're not limited to using the Alex voice
But you're not limited to just these voices. Click on the Customize command at

the bottom of this menu and you'll find a long list of voices. Select one and click the Play button at the bottom of the sheet to audition it. You'll find, for example, that the Samantha voice sounds quite natural. If you'd like something with a more international flair (again, assuming you're living in the U.S.), try the Serena voice found under the English (United Kingdom) heading.

Once you've selected those voices that you'd like to add to your Mac, just click the OK button. The voice files will be downloaded to your computer and you'll be able to access them within any application that uses text-to-speech.

Text-to-Speech is supported throughout the Mac OS, but very few applications have a Speech command (you'll find one in Text Edit by choosing *Edit > Speech > Start Speaking*). But you already know how to make your Mac talk to you even without such a command. Just select the text you'd like your Mac to speak and press the key combination you set for the Speak Selected Text When The Key Is Pressed option. The Mac should start talking. To shut it up, just press that key combination again.