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Topic: Font Management in OS X Panther
Original Message (Posted Mar 22, 04 7:53 am) **New!**

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This post deals with fonts usage in OS X Panther. It's main purpose is to show you where fonts are located on your system and which can be removed. The idea being to keep your fonts as lean as possible and to avoid font conflicts. These issues would benefit prepress operators the most, but can clear up font issues for most users.

If you are having problems getting the correct version of Helvetica, Courier or other fonts to show up in your applications, you are likely experiencing font conflicts. Quark is probably the most susceptible to this. Photoshop, Illustrator and other programs also, but not to such a degree.

1) Let's start by listing the fonts you must have. They are located in the System>Library>Fonts folder:

Courier.dfont
Geneva.dfont
Helvetica.dfont
Keyboard.dfont
LastResort.dfont
LucidaGrande.dfont
Monaco.dfont

Some of the OS X supplied applications that will not launch if Helvetica is missing are mentioned in Apple Knowledge Base article 25486. Others require the presence of Courier. Terminal is one application that will launch, but not display correctly if Monaco is missing. I have found no reference that requires the presence of Geneva, but it's best to leave it as it has long been a standard font for the Macintosh OS.

For general system purposes and operation, the seven fonts listed above are the minimum fonts that should always be active on your Macintosh for OS X Panther and are the only ones you must not delete for any reason. Of these seven, Keyboard.dfont, LastResort.dfont and LucidaGrande.dfont are used mainly for menus and other system font display purposes and so are the most important to the OS itself.

2) There are a few fonts installed by OS X and Microsoft programs (Explorer and Office products) that should be left active since the Microsoft applications need these fonts. Also, many web sites use these fonts and will display better if they are available on your system. They are:

Arial
Arial Black
Tahoma
Trebuchet MS
Verdana
Webdings

None of these fonts should interfere with any prepress operation in the form of conflicting with a PostScript font of the same name, so can be safely left as is.

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All other fonts in the System>Library>Fonts folder can be removed. You will need Administrative access to delete fonts from this folder. If you wish to save them for other purposes, create a new folder on your hard drive and copy them there first. If there are any removed fonts you want to use for a project at a later date, they can always be activated with Font Book, Suitcase X1, Font Reserve, Master Juggler or other font manager.

A note for Microsoft Office. Previously, Office X installed all of its fonts in the System>Library>Fonts folder. The Office 2004 products now install their fonts in the Users>*your_user_name*>Library>Fonts folder. The specific user Fonts folder being the one that was active when office was installed. Tahoma, Trebuchet MS and Verdana are used by Office applications for menus and other program display purposes. All other fonts installed by Office can be removed, leaving only those fonts listed above.

3) If you work in a professional prepress environement, then this section will be important to you. As mentioned above, Courier and Helvetica must be present in some form. They do not, however, have to be the .dfont versions supplied with OS X. Any form of Courier or Helvetica will do to satisfy OS X's needs, whether they are the supplied .dfont, PostScript or OpenType version.

For prepress, remove Courier.dfont and Helvetica.dfont from the System>Library>Fonts folder. Again, you will need Administrative access to remove these two fonts. Then, permanently activate PostScript Type 1 or PostScript OpenType versions of Courier and Helvetica with your font manager.

You can also place permanent copies of these fonts in any of your hard drive folders listed in the next section. Unlike OS 9 or earlier, you can place folders of fonts into a Fonts folder. OS X will see and open all fonts in any sub-folders. The disadvantage of opening fonts this way is that they will not be available to programs running in Classic mode. Use a font manager such as Suitcase or Font Reserve to overcome this limitation.

For the average user, there is no need to replace the supplied .dfont versions of Courier and Helvetica.

4) An important thing to remember is the order of folder preference OS X uses to locate and open fonts. This list is in order from highest priority to lowest.

Users>*your_user_name*>Library>Fonts
Library>Fonts
Network>Library>Fonts
System>Library>Fonts
System Folder>Fonts (the OS 9 Fonts folder)

(Source: Apple Knowledge Base article 106417).

Fonts activated from Suitcase or Font Reserve not located on the Mac in any of the above folders are given the least priority overall. You can see then that a version of Helvetica activated by your font manager will be superceded by any version of Helvetica located in any of the previously listed folders. In order to use your PostScript fonts activated by Suitcase or Font Reserve, all like named versions must be removed from the higher priority folders.

OS X's Font Book has preferential treatment here. By that, I mean fonts you activate using Font Book will get a higher priority over other font managers as it uses the folders listed above to activate and deactivate fonts. If you use Font Book to manage your fonts, it copies the font(s) selected into one of the folder locations listed above depending on which radio button you choose in the application. When you remove the font or fonts, Font Book deletes the fonts from the location they were copied to.

If you choose for me only, the font(s) are copied to the Users>*your_user_name*>Library>Fonts folder, automatically giving them the highest priority over any same named font in the hierarchy. If you switch users, the font(s) will not be active under other accounts on that Mac since they are in your user folder.

If you choose for all users of this computer, then the font(s) are copied to the Library>Fonts folder. In this case, priority drops down one rung in the hierarchy and will be active when switching to another user, even though they didn't open the font(s) since they will reside in the common Library>Fonts folder.

Lastly, choosing classic Mac OS will copy the font(s) into the OS 9 System Folder>Fonts folder. Not only will fonts activated this way be available to applications running in the OS 9 Classic mode, but also to OS X native programs. When you remove fonts opened with this last choice, the fonts remain available to Classic apps until the Classic environment is restarted even though they are removed from the System Folder>Fonts folder. Fonts opened with Suitcase or Font Reserve are also made available to applications running in Classic and OS X simultaneously without copying.

A special note. You cannot use .dfont's in the Classic environment. Standard OS 9 TrueType fonts have their data stored in the resource fork of the file, while a .dfont stores the data in the data fork. Hence the name "d"font. If you open a .dfont with any font manager, your OS X applications will be able to use them, but OS 9 Classic applications will not understand how to read or use these fonts, even if they have been copied to the OS 9 System Folder>Fonts folder. If there is any particular .dfont you wish to use in Classic, you can convert it to an OS 9 TrueType suitcase using a utility such as dfontifier. This application creates a new font that OS 9 can use quickly and easily by dragging and dropping the .dfont you want to use in Classic onto the dfontifier application. You then open the converted font for Classic.

The advantage of Font Book (besides being free) is that by knowing these rules, you can quickly force preference of one font over another of the same name, although you should always avoid knowingly doing that in the first place. The advantage of Suitcase, Master Juggler and Font Reserve is that fonts are simply activated from wherever they are located on the hard drive. Eliminating the possibility of a font being corrupted during the copy method Font Book uses. They also have the advantage of activating fonts for OS X and the OS 9 Classic environment simultaneously, with the exception of .dfonts as noted.

5) Despite its technically different name, "Courier New" conflicts with the PostScript "Courier". If you are in a prepress environment, remove the .dfont version of Courier New also and use a standard PostScript Type 1 or PostScript OpenType copy of Courier instead.

6) For the OS 9 Classic mode, look in the System Folder>Fonts folder. The only ones that must be present are:

Charcoal
Chicago
Geneva
Monaco

If your Mac is capable of booting directly into OS 9, you can use Suitcase, Font Reserve or Master Juggler to open any other fonts you prefer to have open (Font Book is an OS X application and will not run directly under OS 9). Otherwise, these four fonts are the only ones that must be present for OS 9; whether booted into OS 9, or running as Classic within OS X. If you have any other fonts in that folder, move them out. Particularly Helvetica and Courier, which with a default install of OS 9 will be in that Fonts folder and will conflict with the OS X or PostScript versions you may wish to use instead.

7) All fonts in the Library>Fonts folder can be disabled by moving them to another location on the hard drive. Keep them in a separate folder for any other purpose you may have for them. The same goes for the OpenType fonts installed by InDesign 3 so they aren't active when using that program (InDesign opens them from it's own font sub-folder, so while they're available in InDesign, other programs can't see them). The location of those OpenType fonts is Applications>Adobe InDesign CS>Fonts. Again, if you want to use those OpenType fonts for any program, you can activate them with Font Book, Suitcase, Font Reserve, Master Juggler or other font manager.

8) Check the fonts in your Users>*your_user_name*>Library>Fonts folder. Again, look for duplicate fonts that conflict with the same name as those you prefer to use as a PostScript version and remove them.

9) If you have installed Acrobat or the free reader, you will find more PostScript versions of Helvetica and Courier in these applications' Support folders. Since none of them are in a location that will be automatically activated by OS X, they can be left alone. Only those applications that installed them will use those fonts if they are not already active otherwise.

10) Do you need to use a font manager at all? Actually, no. You can activate fonts by placing them into any of the Fonts folders of your hard drive mentioned in section 4 and removing them when you want those fonts closed. For convenience sake, I would suggest always using the common Library>Fonts folder. Fonts placed in this folder will be active to all users of that Mac. If there is some font you don't want other users of that Mac to have access to, place them in your user fonts folder, which is located at Users>*your_user_name*>Library>Fonts. The most convenient way to use this method is to create an alias of the Fonts folder you want to use on the desktop. That way, you don't have to keep opening the hard drive and clicking down through the folders of the disk hierarchy to get to it.

There are disadvantages to this method though. One is that fonts activated this way will not be available to programs running in Classic. Also, you run the risk of damaging fonts by constantly moving, or copying and deleting them from the folder you're using to open and close them with. For these reasons, I do suggest using a font manager.

Conclusion: Tracking down and eliminating all of the duplicate fonts on your system will allow you to use your PostScript versions through Font Book, Suitcase, Master Juggler, Font Reserve or other font manager without interference from other versions automatically given higher priority by OS X, and should then appear properly in all of your applications.

Note: This topic is locked.