

New Technical Notes

Macintosh

®

Developer Support

OV 19 - Stationery Pads

Overview

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With the introduction of AppleShare (Apple's file server) there are restrictions on self-modification of application resource files and the placement of configuration files. This note describes one way to get around the necessity for configuration files.

Configuration Files

Some applications need to store information about configuration; others could benefit simply from allowing users to customize default ruler settings, window placement, fonts, etc.

There are applications which store this information as additional resources in the application's resource file; when the user changes the configuration, the application writes to itself to change the saved information.

AppleShare, however, requires that if an application is to be used by more than one user at a time, it must not need write access to itself. This means that the above method of storing configuration information cannot be used. (For more information about making your application sharable, see NW 12 - AppleShare-able Applications and the Resource Manager.)

Storing configuration in a special configuration file can be a problem; the user must keep the file in the system folder or the application must search for it. This process has design issues of its own.

An alternative to configuration files: Stationery Pads

A basis for one solution to this problem was a user-interface feature of the Lisa Office System architecture. Lisa introduced the concept of "stationery pads", special documents that created copies of themselves to allow users to save a pre-set-up document for future use. On Lisa, this was the way Untitled documents were created.

Your Macintosh application can provide the option of saving a document as a stationery pad, to provide similar functionality. Here's how:

- You'll need to add a checkbox to your `SFPutFile` dialog box (if you don't know how to do this, check out FL 33 - Customizing Standard File); if the user checks this box, save the document as you normally would, but use a different

file type (the file type of a document is usually set when the document is created, using the File Manager Create procedure, or later using `SetFileInfo`).



A Document and its Stationery pad

- Be sure to use a different but similar icon for the stationery pad file. This is easy if you differentiate between stationery and normal files solely by file type—the Finder uses the type to determine which icon to display, see TB 1 - Bundles for help with the “bundle” mechanism used to associate a file type with an icon.
- When opening a stationery pad file, the window should come up named “Untitled”, with the contents of the stationery pad file.
- “Revert” should re-read the stationery pad file.
- Don’t forget to add the stationery pad’s file type to the file-types list that you pass to Standard File, so that the new files will appear in the list when the user chooses Open. This file type should be registered with Macintosh Developer Technical Support.

Further Reference:

- The File Manager
- Technical Note NW 12 - AppleShare-able Applications and the Resource Manager
- Technical Note FL 33 - Customizing Standard File
- Technical Note TB 1 - Bundles
- “Application Development in a Shared Environment”