System 7.x Aliases: Frequently Asked Questions (11/95)

Article Created: 18 November 1994
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TOPIC ---

This article answers several common questions about using Aliases with your
Macintosh computer.

Questions answered in this FAQ:
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1) Will aliases work with disks that are not currently available on my desktop?

2) The Date Modified field of an alias does not stay in synch with the original
file. If I update a file through an alias, shouldn't the date modified for the
alias file be set? I have not been able to figure out the exact rules by which
these dates are modified and coordinated.

3) If I delete a file, what happens to any aliases that point to the deleted
file?

4) If I delete an alias, does it delete the original file?

5) I used System 7 to create aliases to items from multiple volumes on the same
file server. I connect to one of the volumes and double-click an alias for
something on a second volume of the same server. The second volume is connected
with the same user name and password (access rights permitting) as the first
volume from the server. Even if the second alias was created using a different
user name, the second volume is still connected with the first user name because
you cannot log on to the same server twice. Should the user be warned about
this? It seems that this could cause some confusion about how a user is logged
on and what privileges they have.

6) I am using System 7.5 on my Macintosh. Through the Finder I locked several
aliases in my Recent Servers Folder to assure that they would not get deleted as
I accessed more and more servers. I have found that my system hangs whenever I
reach the limit defined by the Apple Menu Options (v 1.0) control panel, and the
Finder tries to replace a locked alias. It appears that the Finder does not
first check to see if the aliases are locked before replacing them.

8) Can I have an alias to a file on a file server?

DISCUSSION ---

1) Question: Will aliases work with disks that are not currently available on my desktop?

Answer: Yes. When an alias to an icon is opened, and the icon that alias points to is on a disk that is not available on the desktop, the Macintosh asks you to insert the disk.

• In the case of floppy disks, CD-ROMs, and removable hard disks, you are asked to insert the disk that contains the target of the alias.

• If a hard disk is attached and turned on, but not on the desktop, opening the alias mounts that disk.

• If the alias points to something on an unavailable file server or to another Macintosh using System 7 File Sharing, the server is automatically mounted on the desktop. If you were signed on as a registered user when the alias was created, you are prompted for a password.

2) Question: The Date Modified field of an alias does not stay in synch with the original file. If I update a file through an alias, shouldn't the date modified for the alias file be set? I have not been able to figure out the exact rules by which these dates are modified and coordinated.

Answer: Aliases are separate files. When you open a file via an alias, the alias is opened, the original is found, the alias is closed, and the original is opened. At this point, the operating system has no knowledge as to how the original file was opened. Since there is no concept as to backward links to aliases, modifications to a file are treated as they always have been. The modification date is set on the modified file, not the alias. Since the alias is a separate file, its modification date can also be changed. Cases where this might occur include having the path to the original file change or modifying the alias file within a utility such as ResEdit.

3) Question: If I delete a file, what happens to any aliases that point to the deleted file?

Answer: Nothing. The next time you try to open the alias, you will receive an alert saying that the original item could not be found. If you later place an icon with the same name in the same location, the alias will find the new icon.

4) Question: If I delete an alias, does it delete the original file?

Answer: No. Aliases and the files they point to are independent. When you rename, move, delete, or change the label of an alias you are only modifying the alias, not the target file to which it points.

5) Question: I used System 7 to create aliases to items from multiple volumes on

the same file server. I connect to one of the volumes and double-click an alias for something on a second volume of the same server. The second volume is connected with the same user name and password (access rights permitting) as the first volume from the server. Even if the second alias was created using a different user name, the second volume is still connected with the first user name because you cannot log on to the same server twice. Should the user be warned about this? It seems that this could cause some confusion about how a user is logged on and what privileges they have.

Answer: This is true but should not be a problem. There is little reason for more than one user name to be used from a particular machine (other than Guest). Since the password is not saved with the alias, the system prompts the user for it at the time they attempt connection to the volume. The dialog box displays the user name. The behavior of aliases mimics the Chooser. If you are already logged on to the server, choosing that server again gives you the opportunity to mount any other volumes you have access privileges for. The only time this becomes inconvenient is when you are logged on to a server as a guest and want to connect to a restricted volume. You must log off the server then log back on as a registered user.

6) Question: I am using System 7.5 on my Macintosh. Through the Finder I locked several aliases in my Recent Servers Folder to assure that they would not get deleted as I accessed more and more servers. I have found that my system hangs whenever I reach the limit defined by the Apple Menu Options (v 1.0) control panel, and the Finder tries to replace a locked alias. It appears that the Finder does not first check to see if the aliases are locked before replacing them.

Answer: This has been reported as a bug in System 7.5. There is a temporary workaround for the problem:

Step 1

Instead of locking server aliases you want to keep, make a new folder for your Apple Menu (you might call it "Recent Saved Servers").

Step 2

Drag aliases that you want to keep from your Recent Servers folder to your new Recent Saved Servers folder.

Step 3

These aliases in your Recent Saved Servers folder are not touched by Apple Menu Options and are accessible under your Apple Menu just as your Recent Servers folder currently appears.

7) Question: Can I start up my Macintosh computer from a file server by putting aliases to the server's System and Finder files on my Macintosh computer?

Answer: No. Aliases do not do this.

8) Question: Can I have an alias to a file on a file server?

Answer: Yes. Opening the alias opens the file on the file server. When an alias points to an icon which is on a file server, but the file server is not currently on your desktop, opening that alias automatically mounting the file server.

If you were signed on as a registered user when the alias was created, you are prompted for the user's password. Apple has provided hooks for file server products that do not support the AppleTalk Filing Protocol (AFP). You should expect to see new versions of these products supporting aliases in the near future.

Article Change History:
10 Nov 1995 - Updated title, reviewed for technical accuracy.
16 Feb 1995 - Changed keyword and reviewed for technical accuracy.

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