Universal Network Access Disk (8/95)

Article Created: 24 August 1995

TOPIC ---

Is there an updated Universal Network Startup disk that will start up a Power
Macintosh 7100/80? Is it technically possible and if so, will we see one anytime
soon?

DISCUSSION ---

With the advent of System 7.1, it became impossible to build a start up floppy
disk with System 7.1 for any machine, because of the enablers for every new
machine. If you wanted something like AppleShare client and Ethernet capability
on the floppy, you might be able to build one for a single machine, depending on
the size of the enabler for that one machine.

System 7.5 unified all the commonality of every enabler and integrated the
functionality into the System file itself. Thus, when System 7.5 was released it
became possible to build, through the installer, an enabler-less, start up
floppy. Squeezing the associated AppleShare and Ethernet files onto the disk was
still a problem.

At that time engineering created the Network Access Disk, 7.5NAD. This was done
by some custom trimming of the System file to remove as many resources as
possible and compressing some remaining resources. This trimming left the System
file still over 1 MB in size, but it freed space for four key files -- the
Network control panel, Ethernet driver, Chooser, and AppleShare client -- with
just 10 KB to spare.

With the release of the Power Macintosh 7100/80, 8100/100, and 8100/110
computers the first enablers, for System 7.5, appeared to support these systems.
PCI-based Power Macintosh computers brought yet again, another enabler to
support these systems. We are again heading to where we were before, with System
7.1, the need for enablers. System 7.5.x will have a growth in the number of
enablers as more computers are released. The enabler for new computers will not
fit on the 7.5NAD floppy based system.

When there is another unifying Mac OS release, the enabler functionality may be
reincorporated into the System file again. Then it will take another effort to
customize the minimum resources in the System file to allow the key network and
sharing access files to also fit on a floppy disk.

Looking at the direction of the Mac OS with Open Transport, the key pieces
needed to fit on the floppy now start to include Apple Shared Library Manager
and associated files plus new control panels. The task, of a Network Access Disk
to support Open Transport, now starts to look pretty daunting.

We may never see another universal floppy disk to start up the entire Macintosh
product line. To support both 680x0 Macintosh and Power Macintosh, with NuBus or
PCI, may involve a compromise using a couple disks or more, with each disk being
one that addresses a subset of all Macintosh computers.

The existing Network Access Disk now supports the first generation Power
Macintosh and earlier systems. Later systems (those requiring system enablers)
have no comparable choice as of this writing. The best suggestion for starting
up an "emergency" system on these later systems, with networking and AppleShare
access, is the start up CD-ROM that comes with each system.

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Keywords: sys75

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19960215 11:05:19.00

Tech Info Library Article Number: 18468