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Macintosh Finder: Foreign Files and Overlapping Icons

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TOPIC -----

I'm using Pacer Software's AFP server on an HP9000 UNIX system, and I have an interesting situation with the server functionality and the Macintosh.

If I log on to the Pacer server from the Macintosh, I see a normal desktop. The icons are spaced as expected. If the UNIX operating system copies a new file into the shared directory, the file icon always appears stacked on/under the icon in the upper-left corner of the Macintosh window.

I haven't seen this situation on other servers, like AppleShare, Novell, or MS LanMan. My theory is that the Pacer server sends down AFP commands to tell the Macintosh that there is a new file on the server, but omits the window location for the new icon. The Macintosh is then putting it at the default location for the first icon during a rebuild of the desktop directory without first checking for a existing icon at that location. The Macintosh Toolbox obviously checks for unique icon positions when creating new files from the Macintosh.

This would seem to indicate that the Macintosh is at fault. Is the AFP server responsible for maintaining a desktop view, or is the Macintosh responsible?

DISCUSSION -----

The Macintosh stores a record called FInfo (or Finder Info) for each file. One of the fields of this record indicates the file's location in the directory or folder. The location field determines where the icon of the file will appear when displayed on the Macintosh desktop.

If you write a program that creates a file, the Macintosh automatically sets this field. You can also write a program that changes this field, but that is a different matter. The File Manager and operating system take care of placing the icon in a unique spot.

However, once an icon has been placed, the Finder does nothing when one file's icon that overlaps another unless the user cleans up the window via

the Special menu.

The Macintosh OS can't set the location field in the FinderInfo record for a file created outside of the Macintosh OS. Therefore, either the server or the program creating the file must track this. This is a UNIX program that has no clue the Macintosh file system exists. Therefore, the server on that platform must recognize that this file was created outside the Macintosh OS, and set the Finder Info appropriately.

Any AFP server running on a non-Macintosh platform must be able to deal with this situation.

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