

MACINTOSH'S SYSTEM 7.0—MAC'S LATEST SYSTEM SOFTWARE

Desktop Publishing for Information Services

One of the benefits of Desktop Publishing (DTP) is that it offers potentially enhanced presentation of information as a low cost alternative to traditional typesetting. Given this opportunity presented by DTP, it could be utilised by information services for three reasons, viz., (i) to reduce the production costs; (ii) to enhance the quality of publications; and (iii) to make it feasible to produce quality publications that could not be afforded by traditional techniques.

What is DTP ?

The mainstream DTP products are primarily page-layout tools, and are basically meant for page layout, where one prepares text in a word processor, graphics in a drawing package, and charts and tables in CAD or spreadsheet software. The page-layout software is then used to place the pieces so they look good on the page, with the layout software handling the columns, text wrapping, and typography. The result is a page that is better-looking than what many people can do by hand, and one that is prepared faster and easier than when using a dedicated typesetter. One can make minor changes directly from the layout software. Then, there are also document publishing programs, which encompasses all the tools that a workgroup might need to manage a reasonably sophisticated technical document.

Macintosh in the DTP Environment

Apple's Macintosh series of DTP system, popularly known as 'Mac' series, is the pioneer in the field of DTP and incorporates features that have made possible the production of quality documents an easy and inexpensive task. Following a trend in the computing industry, Macintosh system software kept getting richer in features and more complex—the primary goal being that they should make the page look pretty. The latest in the series of developments is the release of Macintosh's System 7.0, with many improved features.

Macintosh's System 7.0—a step towards ease of use & functionality

Several new features provided in this version of Macintosh's system software have contributed to its improved power. Some of its important new features are:

No Font/DA Mover

This feature has helped the users to just drag a new font or desk accessory into the Mac's system folder and immediately begin using it.

Find

The Find command has been greatly improved, allowing for very specific or general searches. One can specify whether the item contains/does not contain, ends with/starts with a particular word or set of

words. One also can search by name, size, label, comments, etc. The best part of Find, however, is the fact that it takes the user directly to any item matching the search specification.

Aliases

An Alias can be thought of as a proxy for any item that is accessible on Macintosh—a file, server, etc. One of the ways in which an Alias can be used is to make an Alias of an application that one uses frequently. The Alias is inputted into Apple Menu Folder (within the System folder). Every time one selects that Alias from the Apple Menu, one will launch the application without having to open all the folders to reach it.

File Sharing

File sharing allows one to make folders available to any user within a network environment, with or without password access.

TrueType Outline Fonts

TrueType Outline fonts are sharp, high-quality, fast screen display fonts that also print beautifully. No matter what size, TrueType fonts quickly calculate and beautifully scale to the correct size on the screen and printed page.

Open File/Save File

In previous versions of Macintosh system software, if one needed to open or save a document, and it involved a drive other than active drive, one had to click on the Drive button to cycle through the available drives. With System 7.0, the Drive button has been replaced with a Desktop button that quickly displays all the available drives for fast selection.

Interapplication Communication

Interapplication Communication (IAC) provides a new set of communication capabilities that allows for unique cooperation between applications. The two main features of IAC are:

- *Publish & Subscribe*: Allows for network links between documents.
- *AppleEvents*: Allows for even greater control between programs. It is designed to let a program control one or more other programs in the network.

Other Features

- Views of desktop now can be customized. Fonts used in windows and for icons are user-selectable, and the way icons are positioned on the desktop can be modified as well. When one views the contents of a window in a list, the contents also can be seen simultaneously within each folder if desired.
- The Applications Menu, found at the far right of the Menu Bar, allows to move easily from one open application to another. The application that is active is signified in several ways, including the check mark next to it in the menu.
- A new menu called Label allows any item on the desktop to be given a specific label—even a colour.

Upgradation—Need & Problems

The System 7.0 does not make versions of 6.0 X² system software obsolete; only those users who are interested in its new features need to change. Software compatibility is the greatest problem and worry. Currently, some Apple and third-party products are not compatible with 7.0. One might experience some minor problems or serious incompatibility issues with specific products. One should be therefore cautious about upgrading until evaluating the Macintosh's set-up with Apple's Compatibility Checker.

System Requirement

System 7.0 requires a minimum of 2 MB of RAM and a hard drive. If a Macintosh Plus, Classic, SE, SE/30, Portable, LC, II Iicx, IICI, or IIfx is available with the minimum configuration mentioned, one can run System 7.0. If a Macintosh 128 K, 512 K, or 512 K Enhanced is available, one need to upgrade to at least Macintosh Plus (a Macintosh Plus Logic Board Kit and Macintosh Disk Drive Kit need to be added).

Although 2 MB of RAM is the minimum configuration necessary, one can experience

better performance with 4 MB of RAM or more. This is because System 7.0 will use most of the 2 MB, leaving very little room for applications.

Further Reading

1. Vrantny-Watts, J. An introduction to Macintosh's system 7.0. *Computers in Libraries*, 1991, **11**(8), 14-20.
2. Diehl, S. & Eglowstein, H. Is the typesetter obsolete ? *Byte*, 1990, **15**(10), 152-68.

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