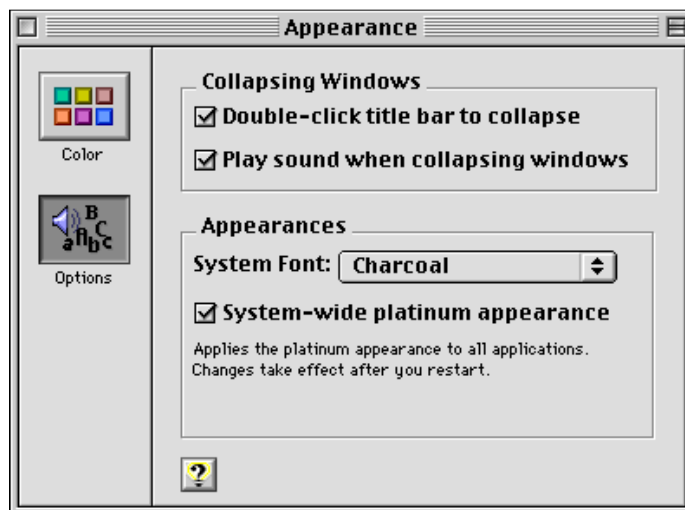This chapter provides a brief overview of the human interface changes in Mac OS 8. It introduces the Appearance Manager and discusses its effect on the Mac OS human interface. It also provides an introduction to the most visible change in Mac OS 8, the platinum appearance.

The Appearance Manager

Mac OS 8 introduces the Appearance Manager, which specifies how all Mac OS interface elements will appear. Appearance settings are specified through the Appearance control panel, shown in Figure 1-1.

Figure 1-1   Appearance control panel

Note the checkbox labeled "System-wide platinum appearance." This is an example of an important change in the Mac OS 8 human interface: users have direct control over the appearance of interface elements. To illustrate this, compare the Find File dialog box using platinum appearance (Figure 1-2) and

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the Find File dialog box on the same computer with platinum appearance
turned off (Figure 1-3).

Figure 1-2   Find File dialog box under platinum appearance
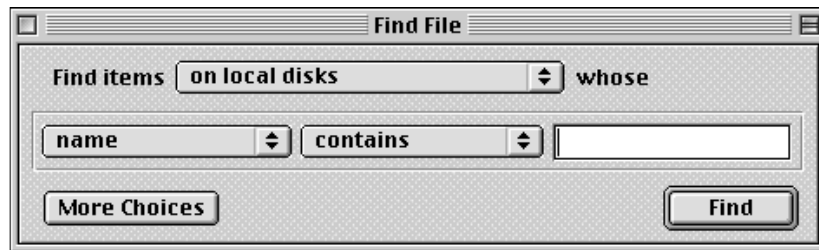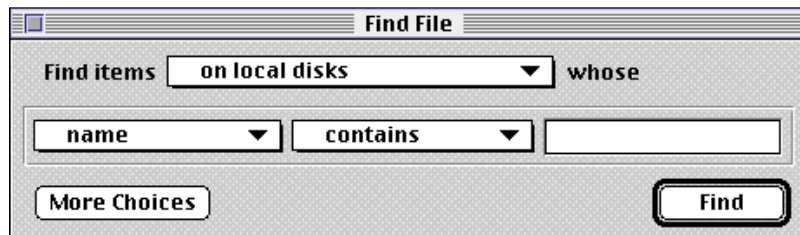

Figure 1-3   Find File dialog box with platinum appearance turned off

Note the differences in buttons, pull-down menus and window structure. This
reveals a major change in the Mac OS human interface: *Since the Mac OS now
provides for multiple appearances, there is no longer a direct correspondence between
the appearance of Mac OS interface elements and their behavior.*

You may find this change a bit startling at first, as it might seem to result in a
less unified and coherent interface. The actual effect is quite the opposite,
however. The Mac OS 8 Toolbox provides an extended, enhanced suite of
interface elements which make it easier than ever to produce a consistent,
attractive user interface. If you do these three things:

n   use the controls, windows and alert boxes described in this document
     whenever possible

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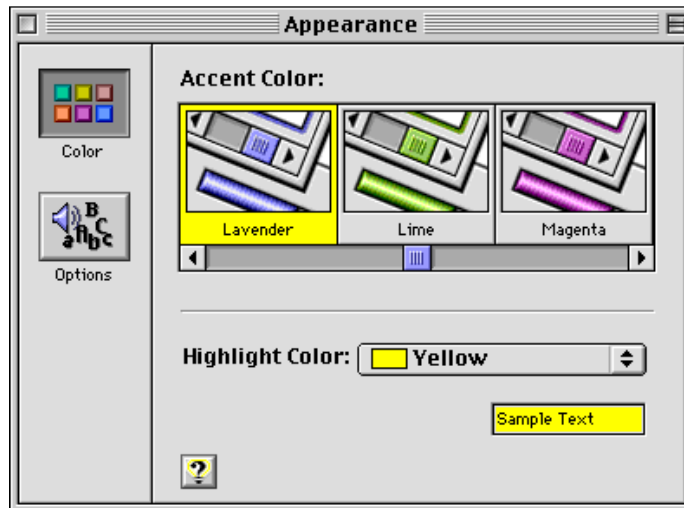
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n use the color palette supplied by the Appearance Manager on those
occasions when you must employ non-standard controls

n follow the layout guidelines described in this document

you will not only save yourself a significant amount of work, you will ensure
that your application will be able to use the Appearance Manager to produce a
coherent, rewarding user experience.

Platinum Appearance

The suite of appearance features (collectively known as a **theme**) which debuts
in Mac OS 8 is called **platinum appearance**. This is the default appearance of
the Mac OS interface, so this document uses platinum appearance as the basis
for all figures. As noted above, however, you should not assume that any
controls you provide will look exactly as depicted in the figures. The
Appearance control panel provides a range of accent and highlight color
choices to the user (see Figure 1-4.)

Figure 1-4 Color control in the Appearance control panel

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Text layout is a special case. The default system font is Charcoal, so that font appears in the illustrations used in this document. However, it is important to note that Chicago provides the best basis for text layout; in fact, it is the metric standard upon which Charcoal is based. Therefore, layout guidelines are based on Chicago metrics. If you keep this in mind when you design your dialog boxes and control panels, your text should look good in whatever System font the user selects.

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