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Dialog View is a control panel that allows you to change the appearance of directory dialogs (Open and Save dialogs). You can control what kind of icons are used, increase the height and width of the file list, and set the font for the file list. It requires System 7. Certain critical routines are accelerated for PowerPC.

Preferences for an Application

When you first install Dialog View, there is only one set of preferences, called “Most applications”. You can create a new set of preferences that will apply to one specific application (or desk accessory) by choosing “New preference set...” from the “Preferences for” pop-up menu.

Internally, applications are identified by application signature (also known as creator code) rather than by name. For this reason, if you rename an application, or if the publisher changes the name of the application when they update it, the preferences will not be lost. As an extreme example of the latter, TeachText and SimpleText have the same creator code, so they would share the same preferences. On the other hand, a major upgrade sometimes involves a change in creator code.

In rare cases, you might want to create a preference set for a program other than an application or desk accessory. (For example, MasterJuggler has the file type of an extension although it behaves in some ways like an application.) By holding the option key as you select “New preference set...”, you will be able to select any file.

Icon options

The choices available for icon display depend upon the version of system software on your Mac. First let us discuss a plain System 7.0, 7.0.1, or 7.1. Without Dialog View, directory dialogs display tiny generic icons. By “generic” I mean that the icons represent very general types of items, such as applications and documents, but do not distinguish between one kind of document and another. If you set the Icons pop-up menu to “Apple standard”, you will continue to see this kind of icon. The menu item “Tiny generic” is dimmed, because it essentially does the same thing as “Apple standard” in this case. If you set the Icons pop-up to “Medium + custom”, you will see icons that are a little larger, more specific, and in color if possible. Choosing “Large” produces full-sized icons, as you might guess.

If you are using System 7 with Macintosh Easy Open, or System 7.1 with System Update 3.0, then the “Apple standard” option produces medium-sized color icons. However, for some reason Apple neglected to handle custom icons. (In case you are not familiar with the term, any icon that you change by pasting an icon into a Get Info window is a custom icon. Application installers often create folders with custom icons.) Choosing “Medium + custom” from the pop-up menu makes Dialog View step in to display custom icons, while Apple still draws most of the icons.

Fetching many color icons from the disk can slow things down. Choosing no icons or tiny generic icons will yield the most speed. The “Medium + custom” choice will be a bit faster if you have installed System Update 3.0 than if you haven’t.

Enable Color and Gray

System Update 3.0 enables directory dialogs to display color icons. However, in some applications, the icons will actually appear in black and white. Checking this option makes the icons use color in all applications (assuming you have a color monitor, of course!) and also ensures that dimmed text and buttons will use true gray rather than checkerboard-pattern gray.

Technical explanation: Directory dialogs in some applications are colorless because they lack 'dctb' resources. The “Enable color and gray” option provides a standard 'dctb' for those dialogs that do not have their own.

Suppress Dim Icons

In “Save” dialogs, names and icons of files are dimmed. Since you are not opening a file, you probably have little need to see the icons, so you may not appreciate the time it takes to draw the icons. Checking “Suppress dim icons” replaces these icons with generic icons of the same size, which can be displayed much more quickly. This option is only available if you have chosen “Medium + custom” or “Large” in the Icons pop-up menu.

Font Options

With the “Font” and “Size” pop-up menus and the two bolding checkboxes, you can control appearance of the text used in directory dialog file lists. If you wish, you can make folders or non-folders use boldface type. A disk counts as a folder. In U.S. systems, choosing “System font” gives you the Chicago font. The size choice 0 is the default size for the system font, which will be 12 on U.S. systems. If you wish, you can also have your font choices apply to the editable text field in a Save dialog.

Stretching the File List

If you check “Stretch”, Dialog View can stretch directory dialog file lists to make them show longer names or more names. It is usually necessary to stretch the whole dialog and move other items around to make room. To control the amount of stretching, you specify the desired file list size and maximum dialog size, by clicking the “Drag” buttons and resizing the resulting windows. Dialog View stretches directory dialogs according to these rules:

1. Never shrink anything.
2. If the original height or width of a dialog already exceeds the maximum dialog size that the user specified, do not increase that dimension any more.
3. Try to stretch the file list part of the dialog to the optimum file list size specified by the user, if that can be done without violating rules 1 and 2.

Due to these rules, the actual size of the file list may end up either greater or smaller than the optimum size that you set in the control panel. The “Try it!” button shows you the outcome for one particular type of dialog.

When you set the maximum dialog rectangle, remember that you are not specifying a typical dialog size; think of whichever of your applications has the biggest, most complicated directory dialogs. On the other hand, you should not make the maximum dialog rectangle cover the whole screen; leave some leeway, say 50 pixels, at the bottom. This is because some programs add items to the bottom of a dialog after Dialog View has done its work.

When stretching the list box, Dialog View tries to make the height a multiple of the height of each line, so that there will not be a fractional line at the bottom. Unfortunately, when Apple software expects to draw color icons, it assumes that the line height will be 18 pixels, and adjusts the height of the list box accordingly. In view of this, Dialog View will make the list height a multiple of 18, except when using tiny generic icons.

Compatibility Notes

Dialog View will not run in the presence of Norton Directory Assistance.

The control panel may crash in the presence of MenuFonts. As a workaround, you could start up with MenuFonts disabled, configure Dialog View, and then restart again with MenuFonts back on.

The Delete dialog, the Links search dialog, and perhaps others, in Microsoft Excel have a conflict with stretching.

The MoviePlayer application from Apple has a conflict with stretching.

Dialog View should load before Default Folder, Aladdin's Desktop Shortcut, and OneClick. You can change the order using an extension manager, or by renaming something to change the alphabetic order.

MasterJuggler's main dialog may look like a standard directory dialog, but it isn't. Since it does not use Apple's routines, my patches do not affect it.

Versions of the Metrowerks CodeWarrior compilers before 5.5 had an incompatibility with vertical stretching. If you use these compilers, you should create preference sets for them in which you either uncheck "Stretch", or specify a relatively small value (say, 300) for maximum dialog height. The HP DeskScan II application has a similar problem.

When you select a font beyond number 31, the little triangle in the font pop-up may be gray. This is a harmless Apple bug.

A Note to Programmers

If you want your application to be compatible with the stretching aspect of Dialog View, obey three rules: First, everything you draw in a directory dialog should be based on DITL items, not absolute positions. Second, use separate DLOG/DITL resources for each distinct dialog, rather than trying to reuse things. (For example, Apple's MoviePlayer 1.0 used a dialog hook to hide some unneeded items, rather than just using dialog resources without the unneeded items.) Third, do not use GetNewDialog to find dialog item positions before calling the Standard File package.

Shareware Fee

The shareware registration fee for Dialog View is US\$10 per user. When you register, I will tell you (by e-mail if possible) how to turn off the weekly shareware reminders. See the chapter "How to Register" for more information.

Distribution

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America Online, CompuServe and NiftyServe, and nonprofit Macintosh user groups which hold regularly scheduled public meetings.

No warranty

Dialog View uses some undocumented techniques. Use it at your own risk. I will attempt to fix any bug that I can duplicate on my own machines, but will not buy other people's software for compatibility testing. It is possible that some future release of Apple system software (such as, say, Copland, AKA System 8) will render Dialog View either obsolete or hopelessly incompatible.

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ther software by this author

Shareware:

- OtherMenu, a hierarchical menu extension which can be used for navigating directory dialogs as well as file launching and other utility functions
- Manual Maker, which binds a set of SimpleText documents together to make a self-running document like this one.
- Carpetbag, which opens fonts, sounds, FKEYs, etc.

Freeware:

- Text Capture FKEY, which lets you copy otherwise uncopyable text to the clipboard
- Text Editor Patches, which can add various feature to applications
- PrintAid, next best thing to a spooling printer driver
- Alias Dragon, restore drag-and-drop function to cross-volume application aliases
- Reference Link, hot-links most any editor to THINK Reference

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