PrintChoice is a control panel device which provides a quick way to select a printer without using the Apple chooser. It adds a menu in the menubar which lists your frequently used printers.

INSTALLING PrintChoice

Just drop the PrintChoice file in your System 7 control panels folder. (PrintChoice is not compatible with system 6.) You can immediately use the control panel device to set preferences or display help information, but it will not add the PrintChoice menu until you reboot.

USING PrintChoice

After you have installed PrintChoice and rebooted, your menubar will have a new menu containing options to add, rename, or delete printers. It will appear to the left of the help menu, with a small printer icon as its title.

Adding a printer to the PrintChoice menu
To make a printer easily accessible from the PrintChoice menu, first select the printer in Chooser. Next, exit Chooser and then select from the PrintChoice menu the option that reads "Add", followed by the name of the printer. A dialog will appear showing the name of the current priner. Just click okay if you want the printer to be listed in the PrintChoice menu with the abbreviated name shown.

Instead, you may choose to customize the name for the printer. You can type in any name you would like, since the name will appear in your PrintChoice menu only.   It does not affect the Apple Chooser or any other user's Macintosh on your network. Press the "Use Default Name" button if you would rather use the full name of the printer.

You may also choose to have AppleTalk enabled or disabled automatically when you switch to this printer. Click the appropriate radio button to use this feature.   When you are happy with the name and settings you entered, click OK or press return.

Once you have added a printer, it will show up in the PrintChoice menu, and the "Add" menu option will be dimmed. You can select other printers from the Apple Chooser and use the same procedure to add as many of them as you would like. Once you have added all of your commonly accessed printers, you may never have to use Chooser again!

Setting the current printer
To activate any printer, just choose it from the PrintChoice menu. The current

printer is displayed in the menu with a checkmark beside it.

Renaming or deleting printers
Select "Printer Settings…" to change the name of a printer or to remove it from the menu altogether. You will see a list of the printers (in the same order they appear in the menu). Click on a printer to select it, then click either the "Modify…" or "Delete" button. Modify will prompt you for a name with the same dialog used to add a new printer, and you may also change the settings regarding AppleTalk.

The "Delete" button immediately deletes the selected printer. When you are done, click OK to continue. There is a shortcut for deleting a printer: hold down the option key and select it from the PrintChoice menu. It will be deleted immediately.

Creating a desktop printer
PrintChoice lets you to create desktop printers, which are icons which let you drag-drop documents to print them to a specific printer. To create a desktop printer, use the "Desktop Printer" button in the "Modify…" dialog.

You can also use destop printers to switch printers from scripts in applications such as HyperCard, FileMaker, AppleScript, or Frontier. Just launch the appropriate desktop printer as though it were an application. If you have configured the AppleTalk settings for the printer, it will be switched on or off appropriately when the printer is enabled.   With this technology you can automate printing labels, envelopes, and letters on three different printers, all from one application.

The desktop printers you create should have an icon similar to the PrintChoice icon. If the first printer you create shows up as a blank diamond-shaped icon, try rebuilding the desktop on your Macintosh. (Hold down the option and command keys when you reboot.)

You may wish to customize the icons of your desktop printers using the icons from the printer drivers (found in your extensions folder). Use Finder's Get Info to view the file information of both the printer driver and the desktop printer. Then, click on the icon in the printer driver's info window, and select "Copy" from the "Edit" menu. Finally, click on the icon in the desktop printer's info window, and select "Paste".

Launching PrintMonitor, Chooser, etc.
In addition to listing the printers you configure, the PrintChoice menu also provides a shortcut way to launch PrintMonitor and Chooser. If PrintMonitor is located in your Extensions folder, it will be listed in the menu. This is especially useful if you have a print job postponed until later and need to change the scheduled print time.

The PrintChoice control panel lets you determine whether Chooser is listed in the PrintChoice menu, in its usual location (the Apple Menu), both locations, or neither. To remove Chooser from the Apple menu, PrintChoice tells Finder to hide the file. Once it is hidden you will not see the file in the Apple Menu Items folder. Use PrintChoice to reverse the setting if you need to access Chooser from the Finder.

Some third party printer drivers provide other utilities, such as "HP PrintMonitor," which are also installed in the Extensions folder. These applications will be listed in addition to (or instead of) PrintMonitor.

Manual Control Over AppleTalk
An option in the PrintChoice control panel will add an item to the PrintChoice menu to toggle AppleTalk on or off.   This is a convenient way to change the setting of AppleTalk without visiting Chooser.   When you disable AppleTalk in this way, the change is only temporary; when you reboot your Macinosh or open Chooser, the original setting will be restored.

Locking the PrintChoice Menu
You may want to disable the options in the PrintChoice menu which allow the user to add and delete printers in the menu.   This simplifies the PrintChoice menu for convenience, or can be a useful tool for network administrators who need to assign certain printers to each Macintosh.   There are two ways to lock the PrintChoice menu.   First, there is an option in the PrintChoice control panel.   This only locks the configuration of the menu (access to other options in the control panel is still permitted) and it is easily reversed by the end-user.

The second, more thorough way to lock PrintChoice's configuration involves locking the PrintChoice preferences file.   First, make sure you have configured the PrintChoice control panel as you need, including hiding Chooser if you want to have complete control over the user's printer access. Then use Finder to open the Preferences folder within the System folder. Hilite the "PrintChoice Prefs" icon found in the Preferences folder and select "Get Info…" from Finder's "File" menu.   Click on the "Locked" checkbox at the bottom of the Get Info window.   Once you have locked the file in this manner, the Control Panel is disabled, and the PrintChoice menu is locked. Use of a disk security product such as "FolderBolt" will insure that a user does not circumvent the printer assignments you have chosen.

LaserWriter Driver 8.1
PrintChoice supports the additional settings, such as postscript printer description (PPD) files, that LaserWriter Driver 8.1 provides. When you change printers using PrintChoice, the settings for the selected printer are restored.

If you need to change the LaserWriter 8.1 settings of a printer which is already in the PrintChoice menu, you should remove it from the PrintChoice menu, make the changes in Chooser, then re-add it. If you only change its PPD settings in Chooser, without the extra step of removing and re-adding it to PrintChoice, your changes will only last until you reselect the printer in PrintChoice.

You can also use PrintChoice to save the same printer with different settings. (Two different PPD files, for instance). To add an additional entry for a printer, hold down the option key when you select the PrintChoice menu.   You will then be able to add an additional entry in the PrintChoice menu, even though the printer is already listed. Be sure to provide a unique name.

Special Features

Serial Port Control
If you have a Silicon Valley Bus Company MultiPort™ serial port switch, you can use PrintChoice to automatically control your serial port settings when you switch printers. For those of you who haven't had the pleasure of using a MultiPort, it's a great little ADB-controlled box which can switch both of your serial ports among any of the six ports built into the box.   For more information, contact Silicon Valley Bus Company at (800) 775-0555, or silibus@aol.com.

Through a special arrangement with Silicon Valley Bus Company, PrintChoice is now bundled with the MultiPort product.   If you received a disk containing PrintChoice along with your MultiPort, you are a licensed user, and do not need to pay for PrintChoice separately.   For those who bought MultiPort prior to this arrangement, PrintChoice must be purchased at its regular price.   See the "Registering PrintChoice" section below.

When a MultiPort is connected to your Macintosh, you will see buttons in the PrintChoice "Add..." and "Printer Settings..." dialogs to allow you to set options for switching your Multiport settings automatically.   You will also find a checkbox titled "MultiPort™ Control" in the PrintChoice control panel. When it is enabled, the PrintChoice menu will have an additional item called "Multiport Settings" which lets you directly control the MultiPort.

Using MultiPort settings in combination with a desktop printer (see the section on desktop printers above), you can fully automate control of your MultiPort from HyperCard, FileMaker, or any other scripting application.

Caveat

Never copy the PrintChoice Prefs file from one Macintosh to another. Though this might seem like an easy way to share the configuration between multiple Macs, the file contains information which is unique to the Macintosh where it is created, and will cause unpredictable results if copied to another Macintosh.

The desktop printers created by PrintChoice do not require Apple's QuickDraw GX to operate.   They are not based on the GX desktop printer technology.

If you use MenuChoice (another piece of shareware I wrote), you should upgrade to at least version 2.1 (that's the latest as of February 1995). Version 2.0 had a slight incompatibility with PrintChoice, which could prevent the PrintChoice menu from responding.

Version History

Version 1.4 February 19, 1995 - Fixed spelling of MultiPort throughout the documentation. Changed the way PrintChoice recognizes when to disable its menu.

Version 1.3 February 1, 1995 - Fixed a bug which corrupted desktop printers if you attempted to create more than one without exitting the printer setup dialog in between. Made many cosmetic changes; mostly reordering and renaming menu items. Fixed control panel problem which corrupted the registration and copyright messages on screen. Save as SimpleText option in help now saves styles.   Fixed two bugs which caused incompatabilities with LaserWriter 8.x drivers.   Now the proper PPD should be chosen even when printers are switched during low memory situations.   Changed the way the menu is inserted into the menubar for better compatibility with other extensions.   Changed the way PrintChoice detects when to dim its menu, for better compatability with various applications that use non-standard window types.   PrintChoice now detects when the Chooser is active and prevents the user from switching printers, which previously could crash Chooser. PrintChoice also requires the user to exit Chooser before adding a new printer, to insure that the selected print driver updates its preferences file.

Version 1.2 January 10, 1995 - Now saves and restores the preferences file for LaserWriter 8.x driver. A separate menu is now displayed in the menu bar, rather than in the Apple menu. Printers are now listed first, before add/delete/rename, etc. Locking the PrintChoice preferences file disables the Add, Rename, and Delete options from the menu. Any application found in the Extensions folder will be listed (instead of just PrintMonitor). Chooser can be optionally listed in the PrintChoice menu, or disabled entirely. Desktop

printers were implemented.

Version 1.1 October 15, 1993 - Now saves the state of "background printing". Fixed incompatability with startup sounds and Finder. Fixed bug which sometimes left the watch cursor showing. Should also fix Now Menus compatibility.

Version 1.0 August 10, 1993 - initial release

REGISTERING PrintChoice

PrintChoice is shareware and costs $14.00. Send a U.S. check or money order to the address below. Please use the "Payment..." button in the control panel to print out an order form. If you cannot print the registration form, be sure to indicate the product and version number you are registering, and specify your name and return address.   Once you have registered, click the "Payment..." button and then select "I have paid" to disable the "Not Registered" message on the MenuChoice startup icon.

I am sorry, but I cannot accept credit card orders. Other forms of payment which you may use if you cannot write a U.S. check:
    (1) International postal money orders in U.S. dollars, readily available at your post office in the U.S., Canada, Japan, and France.
    (2) Compuserve's SWREG forum.
    (3) When no other option is available, cash, preferably in U.S. dollars.

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