

# Human Interface Notes

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Note #13: Unavailable Document Fonts.

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How to warn the user when opening a document that contains fonts not currently available.

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## Introduction

Networking services such as electronic mail and Macintosh File Sharing have made it very easy for users to copy documents between their computers. Frequently, the fonts available on the sending Macintosh are different from those on the receiving machine. This sets up a potential problem that the receiving Macintosh will try and open a document that contains fonts currently not available in its System file.

It is best to treat this as an error condition which must address two important user needs. The first is the need for information. The user must know enough detail about the problem to both understand what has happened and also take corrective action. The second is the need for user control. They must be allowed to stop and correct the problem or to continue opening the document with a reasonable substitution for the missing fonts.

The following guideline suggests one solution to meet these needs. It is not intended to cope with complex document interchange problems that need to map each missing font to a different font in an attempt to maintain overall document format. This is a valid problem, but also a complex one that is not needed by the majority of users.

## Initial Alert

When opening a document containing fonts not currently available in the system, put up a warning alert indicating which fonts are missing and which available font will be a temporary substitute. This warns the user of the pending problem but also gives adequate information to either stop and correct the problem, or to continue, expecting the document to change. An example of this alert is shown in Figure 1.

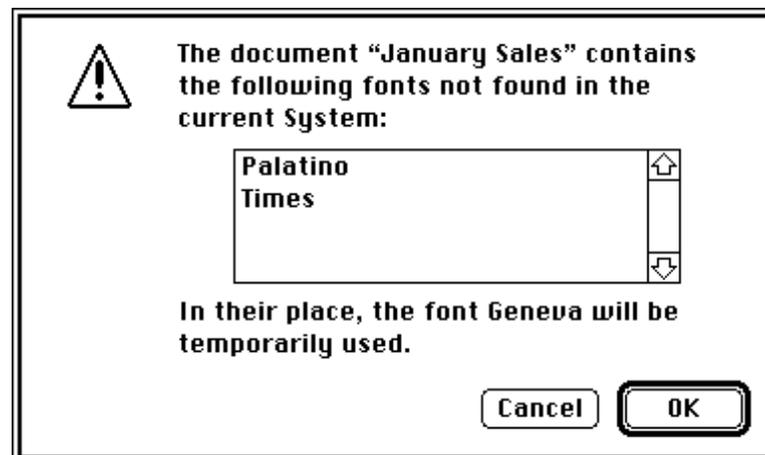


Figure 1. Alert when opening the document.

Once open, it is important that this font substitution is not saved permanently in the document. The font mapping only lasts while the document is open. If closed and then opened later with the original fonts

available, the document should display all fonts with no substitution.

## Font Menu feedback

Once the document is open, any selection that should be displayed in a missing font but is instead using a substitute should not reflect the substitute font in the menu. The most useful feedback would be to include all missing fonts as disabled menu items in the font menu and then mark the missing fonts with check marks as shown in Figure 2. In this example, the original Palatino text displays as Geneva but the Font menu still indicates Palatino.

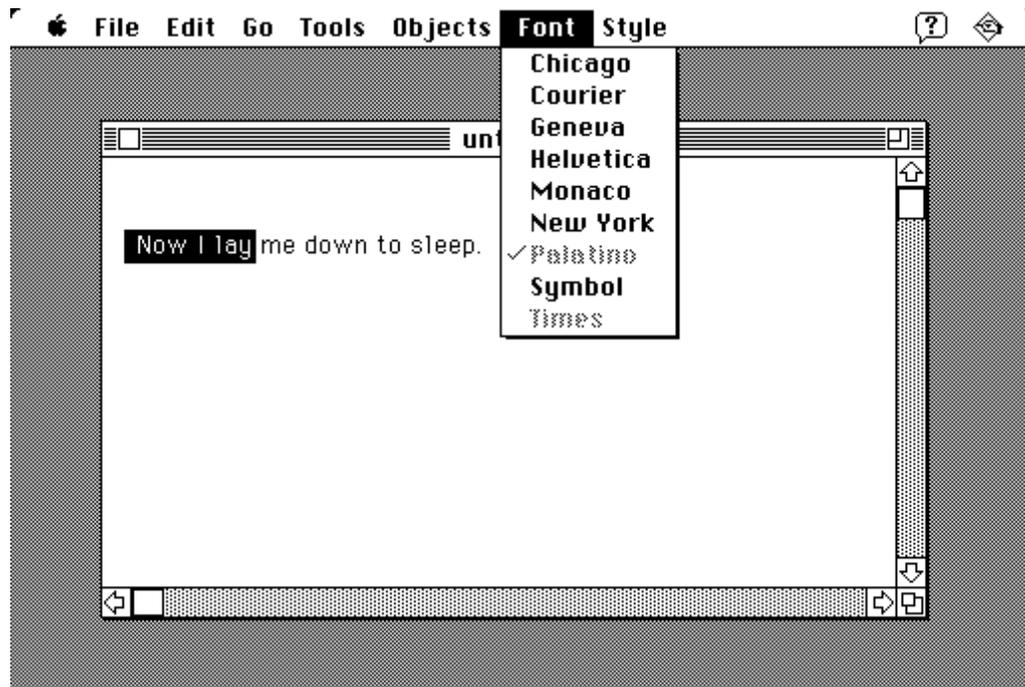


Figure 2. Showing the original font in the Font menu

Another less useful approach is to make no marks at all in a font menu composed only of the available fonts in the system. This obviously doesn't give the user as much feedback but for a simple application is adequate, given the use of the alert in Figure 1.