

# What a mess!

With hard disks gaining gigabytes of space, and costs plummeting, it becomes easy to store vast amounts of data. But can we find that elusive file when we need it?

**W**hatever your profession, you cannot hope to get away with sloppily saved files and cluttered desktops. If you find the sheer number of files in your machine bogging you down, here's how you can spring-clean your PC—and keep it that way all the year round.

## A clean start

The first step to managing your files is in creating the right kind of file for the right job. Well, the mismanagement of files begins here too. Let us take a small example: Using PageMaker for creating a resumé is like using a sledgehammer to swat a fly. Use a word processor like MS Word for formatted text. For e-mail attachments, a plain ASCII text file created in, say, Windows Notepad, is ideal—it is light and easily transportable.

Files must be saved in appropriate directories or folders. It is a bad habit to type [Ctrl]+[S], hit [Enter] and save the file just about anywhere under whatever name happens to pop up by default. No company would store every bit of paper in the same filing cabinet—similar sheets would be collected together in files and arranged in the cabinet in some logical order. Similarly, we must treat our virtual or digital files with equal common sense. A well-organized folder and file system will help you locate your data faster.

## Files with Attitude

You may need to share your files with your colleagues, and you

might not want them to make any changes to your files. To do this, set the file attributes. Select the file, press [Alt]+[Enter] or right-click and select *Properties*. A window pops up with details about the space occupied, location etc. and options to make the file *Read-only*, *Hidden* and *Archive* (default setting is *Enabled*). To enable an option, click on (3) its check box. *Read-only* makes the file unmodifiable. In this case, if you do accidentally make any changes, you are prompted to save the file with a different filename or extension. The *Hidden* attribute hides the file

from normal view. To view hidden files, select *View > Folder Options*, click on the *View* tab and check the *Show All Files* under the *Hidden* option. *Archive* is enabled by default; some backup applications use this attribute to determine whether the data has been backed up previously.





The urls file is Archive-enabled by default

ly.

### A peep into your files

Windows 98 includes a set of file viewing utilities called Quick Viewers. They enable you to preview the contents of a file without opening its associated application. To preview a document, right-click on the file, and click on QuickView in the context menu. In case you do not see this option, it might not have been installed during Windows setup. It could also be that QuickView does not recognise the file, or the file type has not been correctly associated with the appropriate viewer. The Quick Viewer associations are stored in the registry under HKEY\_CLASSES\_ROOT\QuickView but messing with the Registry is strictly not advisable for novices.

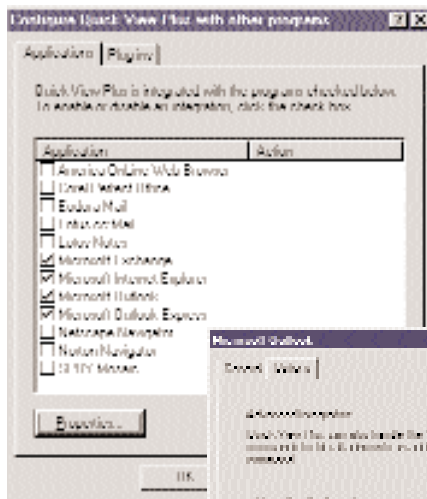
While in the QuickView mode, you cannot edit a document. QuickView supports about 30 different types of files (including word processing documents and graphics) but fails to recognise many of the now-common files like .htm, .gif, and .tif. To preview these file formats, you will need to install a file utility like Inso Corp's QuickView Plus (See *Software Test, CHIP March*), or better still, a complete file management utility like Mijenix's PowerDesk 98 (See *Software Test, CHIP April*).

PowerDesk provides previews for about

80 different file formats in its preview pane. The Preview pane for files can be enabled/disabled using the magnifying glass icon on the toolbar or by selecting Options > Viewer Pane. Under Options > Preferences > File Viewer, you can configure your previews. PowerDesk supports Windows QuickView which, when selected, opens an external QuickView window in addition to the viewer pane. For a free 30-day trial of PowerDesk 99, log on to [www.softseek.com](http://www.softseek.com).

QuickView Plus is a handy tool for those who routinely deal with a large number of file formats. This file viewing utility supports 200 file types and can be integrated with browsers, e-mail programs and groupware, permitting previews from within these applications. You will need to integrate it during installation or configure it later to view e-mail attachments without loading the associated program.

To quickly view e-mail attachments without going through the painful procedure of loading the entire application, right-click the attachment you want to view. On the context menu, click QuickView Plus. By default, QuickView Plus opens or prints Outlook and Outlook Express file attachments without starting the application. Use the Configure



Some applications you can configure Quick View Plus with, and set the options for e-mail attachments

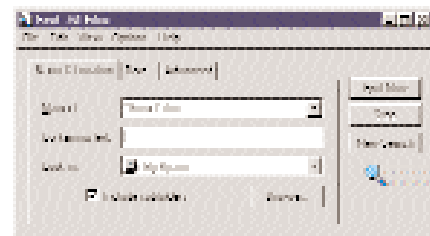
QuickView Plus with other programs, select the application and click Properties. Under Options, select Always for opening and printing file attachments.

### Fish out that file

With all the data stored on your machine, you might not always find it easy to trace a document. Use Windows' Find tool to fish out that file, wherever it may be. There are many ways to do this:

(a) Highlight the specific folder or drive to search in, select Tools > Find > Files or Folders or Press [F3]

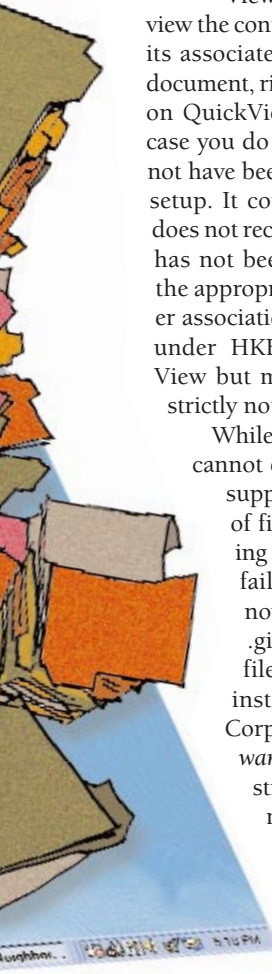
(b) Select Start > Find > Files or Folders or



Using the \* wildcard to Find by filename

(c) [Windows icon] on a Microsoft-compatible keyboard + [F].

Use Wildcards: When a filename eludes you or you want to save time, use the '?' and '\*' symbols to represent single and multiple characters. Looking for a .doc (Word) file that you know contains the word 'theme' in its filename? Type \*theme\*.doc in the Name box (See *Screenshot*), and specify My Computer (to search all the drives on your PC) in the Look In box. You can also Browse to select a folder on your machine, or in the Network Neighbourhood, in case of a LAN. Additional search criteria include the Date and Advanced tabs. These are very useful when you know a file was created recently, say, just the previous day. Here, you can simply choose the Find all files created/modified... during the previous X days (1 in this case). When you are not sure about the date, you can specify a date range, spread it across months or years using the



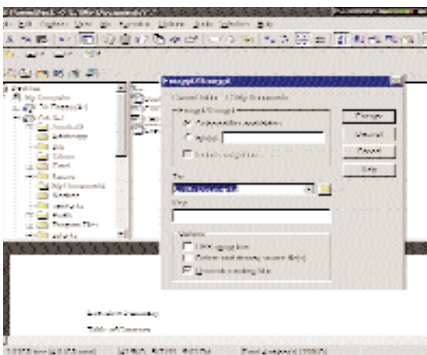
between option. With the Advanced tab you can specify the file type and size of file. The search results can be saved for reference.



PowerDesk has a special tool called File Finder to replace the Windows Find. The File Finder can be accessed from its icon on the toolbar or from Tools > Find > File Finder and even from Start > Find. PowerDesk actually offers you a choice between using File Finder and Find. It permits all the search criteria of the Find tool and goes a little further—allowing you to specify the time of file modification and file attributes, among others. The unique thing about File Finder is its preview pane in the search results window. Search results can be saved as a separate file, printed directly or copied to the Clipboard.

### Keeping it Top Secret

If your data is confidential, use the Encrypt/Decrypt feature in PowerDesk to secure it from prying eyes. Click on File > Encrypt. A dialog box with options to Encrypt/Decrypt the selected files/folders



Keeping files from prying eyes by encrypt-

pops up. Choose the destination for the encrypted file and enter a key (must comprise 3 to 32 characters), which is the code required for decrypting. Lastly, specify whether you want to completely destroy the source file(s) from your PC's hard disk. Use this feature only for confidential files. The Overwrite existing files option does just that, the original file is overwritten by the encrypted file. In case you don't want to encrypt the file on your PC but merely want to avail of security while transferring or sharing files, you can create an encrypted copy of the source file, without affecting the source itself. Don't check any of the boxes in the Encrypt/Decrypt box.

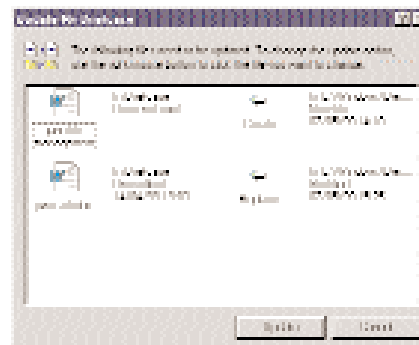
You may encrypt a file multiple times by repeating the above operations. Such default encryption provides adequate security for ordinary purposes. (*For more on data encryption, see 'In a Jumble' in this issue*)



### A Briefcase in your Notebook!

If you have been struggling with updating files from your notebook to the desktop PC at office, and find re-doing your Word and Excel files a sheer waste of time, the solution to this lies in your Briefcase. The Briefcase folder on your desktop enables you to synchronise (update) files between your PC and your laptop/notebook. In case you have not installed it yet on your machine, insert a Windows 95/98/NT CD, go to Add/Remove Programs in the Control Panel, click on Windows Setup, Accessories and check the box marked Briefcase. The Split From Original option lets you create a separate copy of the file.

When you need to transfer your documents from the PC to your notebook, right-click on the icon and use Send To > Briefcase. Work on your files at home or while on the move. When you return to your desktop, update the Briefcase using Update (All/Selection). By default, the Replace action (arrow) points to the older file. To change the arrow's direction or to skip updating, right-click on the arrow and choose your option from the context menu. If you



Synchronising your Briefcase and Desktop

want to update only some of the Briefcase files, select the same and use Update Selection.

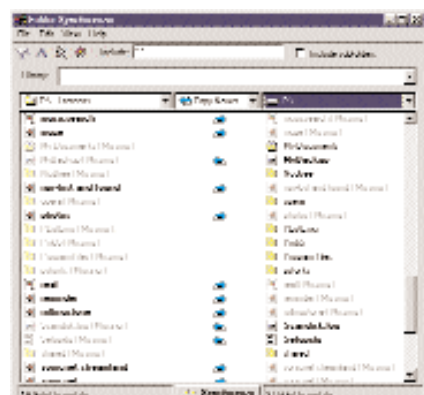
Your notebook and desktop PCs need not be two islands of information; get them in sync using Briefcase.

### Synchronising your PowerDesk

The Folder Synchronizer option copies or moves one or more files between two different folders. You can update a selection of files in one batch operation by setting filters or by individually updating them. This tool is very useful for:

- Syncing a single set of files between a laptop and desktop PC; files are updated in either of the computers
- File sharing, working locally on files that normally reside on a network
- Backing up selected files to a floppy or other external drive rather than using a dedicated backup utility
- Identifying redundant data: comparing folders to determine any duplicate files that can be safely deleted

To synchronise two folders with Folder Synchronizer, this is what you can do:



The highlight indicates that files need to be updated

## RECYCLE YOUR TRASH

- 3 Deleting a file merely moves it into the Recycle Bin. It is put in temporary storage and can be restored, if required, using File > Restore. The trash can is not meant for temporary storage, as some people seem to think.
- 3 Emptying the Recycle Bin removes the file from disk.
- 3 If deleting a file was the last action performed, it can be undone using the Edit > Undo Delete command in the Recycle Bin folder.

## TROUBLESHOOTING

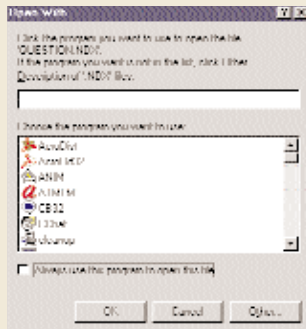
When I switch to MS-DOS, my long filenames get shortened to the 8:3 format.

Windows 9x supports long filenames, which can be as long as 255 characters and be a combination of various characters (except /|:\*?<>|). DOS makes a short filename by keeping the first 6 characters of a filename and appends a tilde (~) and a number to make an 8-character long filename. The original longer name is preserved as an alias (and appears on the right side of the DOS screen).

When I click to open a file, I get an Open With dialog box requiring me to select a program to open the file with.

This happens when the file is of a type that is not registered. In such a case, select a program from those listed, uncheck the box Always use this program to open this file and click OK.

I want to use WordPad to open my text files automatically since Notepad, the default program associated with text files, cannot handle large files.



To change the file association: Click on the file name in Windows Explorer, press [Shift] + right-click your mouse, and choose Open With in the context menu. Select WORDPAD and, this time, check the box Always use this program to open this file. This makes WORDPAD the default program to open all text files in future. I opened an e-mail attachment, made some changes and saved it. Where has the saved file gone?

Once an e-mail attachment is opened it gets stored in the C:\Windows\Temp directory. Alternatively, you could use Save As on the attached file and save it in another folder.

Each time I work on a document, multiple .tmp files of the same are created.

These are temporary files (a misnomer, really) which are created as you work on your documents, and some of them

When you start Folder Synchronizer, two default folders are selected, you can browse to choose whichever folders you need to sync. Use **Edit > Set Filters** to specify what kind of files to sync. Select Copy/Move the newer or older files.

**Note:** Avoid synchronising root/system directories such as C:\Windows or system files. Unnecessary tampering can lead to problems with your computer.

Click on the Synchronize icon at the bottom of the window, or select **File > Synchronize** to carry out the syncing operation. To synchronise one file at a time, move your mouse to the action arrow, which transforms to a button. Click on this to sync the item. Once the files are synchronised, their status changes to = (equal).

Data has a tendency to expand to fill any available space.

A 4.3 GB hard disk might give the illusion of plenty of space, but as you mindlessly store data, you will see how quickly your PC starts to choke from file overload. Clear that mess, now!