



DropBox

Change of philosophy

Of all the cloud-based storage, synchronisation and sharing services available, DropBox is still the one that I encounter the most frequently. I have recently discovered a change in how it handles shared folders of which some of you may not be aware.

In the dim and distant past when DropBox was still a relatively new product, if you shared data with others it would take up space on their computer hard disk, but it didn't count towards the use of their data allocation on the DropBox servers. This has changed, as any data which you can access now takes up space both on your hard disk and in your account on the DropBox server.

I suspect this change has come about because of the way they have restructured their plans. Back in the early days, 2.5Gb was available for free, then you could purchase additional space in 5Gb or 10Gb "chunks". Now, they only offer 2Gb for free or 1Tb (1000Gb) for \$9.99 a month (which is about what a 10Gb chunk used to cost). As many people now buy the 1Tb plan, it will be much easier for them to manage their server system (and thus make it more reliable) by straight duplication of the shared data so that it uses the capacity purchased in each account. This only becomes an issue for those people who still have a free account. If someone shares a large folder with them (ie: containing 2Gb or more of data) they won't be able to access it as they won't have enough storage capacity in they plan.

Just something to be aware of when sharing data using DropBox.

Spare Kit

If you rely on your Apple technology, be it Mac, iPhone or iPad, for your income or to manage your life, then its failure can be more than an inconvenience. It might not be cost effective to buy two of a critical piece of kit, but when you buy a new Mac it can often be useful to hang onto the old one just in case. It might not be able to do everything your shiny new one can, or do it as quickly, but in an emergency it might be better than nothing. I always encourage the maintenance of a good backup, but if you have nothing to restore the backup to it isn't going to be very helpful. So, when you are looking at buying a new Mac or iPhone/iPad, give some thought as to what to do with the old one before you dispose of it.

Away from the desk...

Well worth a visit: the magenta cycle/walk way from Nelson Street to Canada Street, reusing the old Nelson Street on-ramp. Day or night, it's fun and interesting.



Getting to Grips with...The Finder



The Finder is a piece of software that you use all the time without actually knowing. This is because it opens automatically when you turn on your Mac and it is always running. Technically, it's a file manager. In other words, it is the software which lets you manage files, folders, drives and applications. You open applications from the Finder. You copy and delete files in the Finder. You move files into folders in the Finder. It is "the front" of the Mac and creates what is known as the "desktop metaphor" - files, folders, drives and applications that are represented as icons, like having objects on your desk.

Files, also called documents, are created with applications. This is a document created with Pages, Apple's word processor:

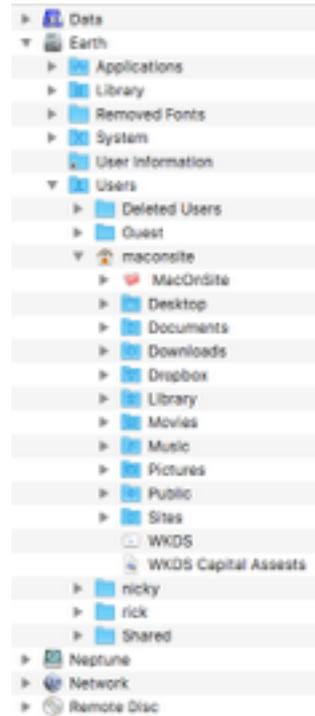


The file is stored on a drive, such as a hard disk, USB stick or CD. When a file is initially created in an application (by choosing New from the File menu for example) it only exists in RAM (Random Access Memory). When the file is Saved, it is copied from RAM to a disk. When you open an existing file,



it is read from the disk into RAM. The Finder enables us to manage the files stored on disks.

Just having lots of files on a drive would be very difficult to manage, so Folders, also called Directories, make this much easier. Folders can contain files, other folders, and applications. They are organised in a hierarchy, which is easiest to see in View layout:



The Finder can be tailored in a number of ways to suit different ways of using it; what sort of drives appear on the desktop, what items appear in the sidebar, how the contents of Finder windows are viewed, where the Dock is located and what it contains.

In addition, the menu bar at the top of the screen is used by some applications to provide easy access to their functionality, such as Time Machine and DropBox. By default, the menu bar will display the time and access to SpotLight, the built-in search technology.

Over the years the "look and feel" of the Finder has changed many times, but the original style of files and windows is still recognisable:



Much of the functionality which we use regularly is centred around Finder windows, which is what we will concentrate on next time.

Next issue... Finder windows