

FontInfo

another DA

you can't live without!

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Introduction


FontInfo is a Desk Accessory intended to make it easy to find characters you can't see on the keyboard and to insert them into your documents. *FontInfo* shows you all characters in a font and tells you how to reach them from a keyboard by telling you what keystrokes to make when you click on a character. *FontInfo* can also insert these characters for you into a document or into the clipboard.

Info on *FontInfo*

The Macintosh interface may be the most user friendly interface you have seen so far, but it has some peculiarities. Of course, as long as you can do your thing with a mouse, nothing beats a Mac (or two). But, supposed you want to type or edit some text, the mouse won't help you very much in entering the character symbols. You still must do that with the good old keyboard the mouse was supposed to make you forget. And, since most characters you want to type can easily be spotted on the keyboard, typing will not be very hard, generally speaking.

There are however some characters that cannot be typed easily. For example, typing the character 'Ä' in this particular font (Helvetica) takes pressing the option key and the n key simultaneously releasing them and then pressing the shift key and the a key simultaneously. Perhaps it makes sense to you, or are you trained in remembering such silly conventions, but to most people (especially the inexperienced computer users, who the Mac is meant for) it is like algebra. So, if you know how to type every available character in every available font on your machine, you can be considered most luckily and you don't need this DA, since it is meant to help you at finding, typing and event inserting characters in your text just by clicking on them. For those of you who are still around, I will give a short description of exactly what *FontInfo* does, and how to use it.

What can *FontInfo* do?

When you call up *FontInfo* from the -menu (you didn't know that option-shift-k in the Helvetica font was the apple symbol? Then read on!) you are presented with a window containing two subwindows of which the lower, which contains all characters in the current font, is the largest and the upper, showing you the keystrokes, is the smallest. The window title tells you which font in what size is currently selected. It always comes up first with Geneva 12.

Of course you get a *FontInfo* menu as well. This menu contains the following items:

- About *FontInfo*... which shows you nothing you don't know already,
- a list of the most frequently used font sizes, of which the outlined numbers represent the font sizes that are present in your system for the current font,
- a list of all fonts that are present in your system.

If you have more than ten fonts on a Mac with a small screen (512, Plus, SE) you'll need system version 4.1 or up for scrolling menus. On the Mac II (large screen) "a modern system" will already be installed (scrolling starts at more than 17 fonts here).

The *FontInfo* menu allows you to select the font you want to use as well as the size in a straight forward manner. The "About *FontInfo*..." item has been added just for the sake of conventions. Selecting a new font shows you all characters available in that font. Selecting a new size does the same, but also resizes the window so you can see all characters at once. This implies that on a small screen the practical limit for the character size is 18. Unfortunately, scroll bars are not available yet.

Now, about its real use! When you click in the lower part of the window on some character, the upper part will display the keys you need to press to get that character in your text (of course in the current font). So, if you click on 'Ä' in the Helvetica font (and a lot of other fonts as well) the upper window part displays 'option-n shift-a'. The convention used here is, that two keys joined by a hyphen should be pressed together at the same time thereby forming a new character, while keys separated by a space should be pressed one after another (the first one first, of course). So in order to get 'Ä' you must press the option key and the n key together, release them, and then press the shift key and the a key together (it is advisable to press the keys in the order of their appearance, e.g. first press the option key, keep it down, and then press the n key). Another convention used here is: option for the option (or alt) key, ctrl for the control (or ctrl) key and shift for the shift key. Character keys are displayed as they are labeled. Capitals are displayed with the shift-lower case combination (unfortunately it is not possible to find out which shift key combination gives characters other than capitals, since there are various types of keyboards around, which only share the shift/capital convention). Control characters are also provided with the ASCII name they have and the key that chooses them on the keyboard.

When you select another font, the character you've chosen before remains highlighted so you can see what the the same keystrokes give in the other font (or what font substitution may lead to). You can also enter characters from the keyboard (simply press some keys) to see which character they actually select. So, if you press option-n shift-A the 'À' character will be highlighted. You can also see the keystrokes you made in the upper window part.

Other Options

You can copy the selected character to the clipboard by either selecting cut or copy from the Edit menu or pressing **⌘-C** or **⌘-X** as usual. Pressing **⌘-Q** closes *FontInfo*. Copying appends the selected character to the clipboard (this is not very Mac-like). You can copy up to 32 characters. When you want to copy more characters you have to switch to your document, paste them and go back. The cut operation copies only the selected character onto the clipboard. Anything that was on it is destroyed. The clear command (for which there is no keyboard shortcut) also destroys the contents of the clipboard, so cut works like clear-and-copy (instead of the usual copy-and-clear). The other commands, paste and undo, have no meaning: selecting them results in a warning sound. Alas, the font and size information is not retained, so choosing a character, copying it, and pasting it can result in obtaining the character in a different font (which therefore may look differently). You must change this in the program you pasted the character into if possible.

Another nice option can be obtained by pressing the **⌘**-key and then clicking on a character. This causes the selected character to be inserted into another program as soon as you leave *FontInfo* (either by clicking on the window you want the character to be inserted into or by closing or leaving *FontInfo*). So if you have a text window which only occupies part of the screen and you can still reach *FontInfo*'s window, you can enter text without typing at all, simply by switching between your document and *FontInfo*, pressing the **⌘**-key, selecting the next character and switching back to your document. You can select up to 16 characters that are to be inserted at once. Every click combined with pressing the **⌘**-key adds one character to the list of characters that will be inserted into your document when you switch back. Clearing this list can be done by typing **⌘-BS** (that is pressing the command key and the BackSpace key, which is the usual delete key, at the same time). In this case, font and size information is also not retained, so you may have to edit the inserted characters. This option cannot insert characters into another DA!

About the copyright and my fee

You must know that *FontInfo* is Shareware, and therefore may be copied, distributed and used freely, but it may not be sold or used in commercial applications, nor is it allowed to use it as a part of a commercial application, nor is it allowed to make profit out of it in any other way (such as selling disks containing *FontInfo* for more than the price of the disk itself). It is also not allowed to copy, distribute or use this DA in countries which are not respected democracies or violate human rights seriously (I don't think there is a country which doesn't violated them even slightly) or which are at war. This includes countries like: South Africa, El Salvador, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Israel, etc.

When you copy *FontInfo* you must also copy this manual completely (including the copyright notices and the moral remarks). I also cannot take any responsibility for the use of *FontInfo*, though I think there are no dangers attached to it. Despite all these "hard" words there is also a nice side: I don't expect you to pay any kind of fee for using it. You may however send me a note (perhaps including some comment) since I am very interested to find out who uses it where and when.

Bugs

There are no bugs known to me, but I'm sure someone will come up with one someday (as you know: "Programs are faulty unless proven otherwise" (I forgot who said that)).

Thanks to...

David HM Spector who wrote the "Generic DA" that *FontInfo* was based upon and Koen de Smedt who checked this manual.

More moral remarks

Well all you folks, start writing DAs and other nice programs and give them away for free. It is not extremely difficult (this one was written in one day) and can be very rewarding. But please, NO VIRUSSES!

So who's to blame?

That's me! I have written both the desk accessory and the manual (including the moral remarks) so there is no one else to blame (or praise). Amongst my addresses are:

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