

The Desktop Database

For quick access to the resources it needs, the **Finder** maintains a central **desktop database** of information about the files and directories on a volume. The **Finder** updates the database when applications are added, moved, renamed, or deleted.

Normally, your application will not need to use the information in the desktop database or to use **Desktop Manager** routines to manipulate it. Instead, your application should let the **Finder** manipulate the desktop database and handle such **Desktop Manager** tasks as launching applications when users double-click icons, maintaining user comments associated with files, and managing the icons used by applications.

Although there may be instances where you would like to gain access to the desktop database by using **Desktop Manager** routines, you should never change, add to, or remove any of this information.

IMPORTANT NOTE: *Manipulating the desktop database is likely to wreak havoc on your users' systems.*

In case you should discover some important need to retrieve information from the desktop database or even to change the desktop database from within your application, **Desktop Manager** routines are provided for you to do so. Your application probably will not ever need to use them however.

Much of the information in the desktop database comes from the bundle resources for applications and other files on the volume. (See the description of Finder Information in the Volume Catalog for a discussion on setting the bundle bit of an application so that its bundled resources get stored in the desktop database.) The desktop database contains all icon definitions and their associated file types. It lists all the file types that each application can open and all copies or versions of the application that's listed as the creator of a file. The desktop database also lists the location of each application on the disk and any comments that the user has added to the information windows for desktop objects. The **Desktop Manager** provides a new set of routines that lets your application retrieve this information from the desktop database. These are described in Desktop Manager Routines.

The **Finder** maintains a desktop database for each volume with a capacity greater than 2 MB. For most volumes, such as hard disks, the database is stored on the volume itself. For read-only volumes-such as some compact discs-that do not contain their own desktop database, the **Desktop Manager** creates it and stores it in the System Folder of the boot drive.

Note: If you distribute read-only media, it is generally a good idea to store on each volume both a desktop database (for users running System 7.0) and a Desktop file (for users running older versions of system software). Create a desktop database on your master volume by pressing Command-Option when booting your system with System 7.0. Then create a Desktop file by pressing Command-Option and restarting your system with version 6.0.

For compatibility with older versions of system software, the **Finder** keeps the information for ejectable volumes with a capacity smaller than 2 MB in a resource file instead of a database.

Although the **Desktop Manager** provides tools for both reading and changing the desktop database, your application should not ordinarily change anything in the database. You can read the database to retrieve information, such as the icons defined by other applications.

Note: The desktop database does not store customized icons (that is, those with resource IDs of -16455 described in **Customized Icons**), so your application can not retrieve them by using **Desktop Manager** routines.