

Electronic documents can easily be sent to others for use, often much faster than sending a printed version. Unlike the printed version, however, the receiver must be able to open the electronic document before they have any chance of reading it. If you send or receive files you will quickly be faced with the task of translating files. This document covers strategies for making documents readable (i.e. translating files) for either Macintosh or Windows users.

There are three strategies for translating files: using cut-and-paste to transfer text, using the translators built-in to a word processor or other application via the "save as" or "open" menu items, and using a translator program. Whatever combination of strategies you use, you will also have to consider the medium that the files exist in, such as e-mail (perhaps as an attachment) or on a computer disk.



### Cut-and-Paste

**Advantages:** Fastest method, especially for sending text via simple e-mail

**Disadvantages:** Text only (very few formatting codes)

**What to do:** In most applications (including FirstClass) you can use the mouse to highlight a section of text, then go to the Edit menu and select "Copy" (Control-C or Command-C). Next, switch to the destination application and go to the Edit menu and select "Paste" (Control-V or Command-V). For a shortcut in selecting an entire document or message for copying, notice the "Select All" option in the Edit menu.

This strategy works for many different applications. You can cut-and-paste between word processors on the same computer (for example, between ClarisWorks and Microsoft Word on a Mac) or between a word processor and e-mail.



### Built-in Translators

**Advantages:** More formatting included than cut-and-paste. Does not require translation work for other person.

**Disadvantages:** Results vary with applications involved. When sending, you may not be able to preview how well the translation worked.

Most applications have built-in translators available for either saving or opening files in different formats.

**What to do when sending a file:** Open the document you wish to send. Go to the File menu and look for the "Save As" option. In the window that opens look for a "File Format", "Save File as Type" or similar box. Click on this box to find out which file format options are available to you. Choose the option your receiver will be using, or something lower, and save the file in that format. For example, if you are saving a file for a Macintosh person who uses Microsoft Word 6.0 you should save using Word 6.0 for Mac or Word 5.x for Mac formats.

As a backup, save another version of the file under a different name in a "common" format readable by most programs. For word processing, the most readable formats are RTF (Rich Text Format), Word 4.0-5.0 (for Mac users) and WordPerfect 5.1 (for Windows users).

Remember that whenever you save a file into a different format, there is the potential to lose special formats or other features. For example, information in text boxes or tables might not survive a translation.

**What to do when receiving a file:** Have the document ready to access – on a disk or downloaded onto your hard drive if received in e-mail. Run the application you want to use to open the document. Go to the File menu and select Open, then locate the file and click on the Open button. (You may have to adjust the “view files of type” option in the Open window until you can see the document.) If your application has the appropriate translator available it will open the file.

In some cases, your application will open the file but it will be full of “garbage” characters. Try scrolling down to see if the text of the document is still intact, usually in the middle of the sea of random characters.



### **Using a Translator Program**

**Advantages:** Most accurate and complete translations, wide variety of formats available, only option for translating multiple documents at one time

**Disadvantages:** Most expensive (you have to purchase the program)

Directions vary, but programs exist to make the work of translating documents easy and accurate. The CAI lab has computers with MacLink Plus (Macintosh) and Conversions Plus (Windows) translators installed on them. You can use these computers for occasional translation work, or to try the programs before purchasing.



### **Medium to use when Sending Files**

**Disks.** Unless special steps have been taken, Windows computers cannot read Macintosh formatted disks. If you are a Macintosh user and you wish to send a disk with files to a Windows user, make sure to use a PC formatted disk. Most Macintosh models can use and even format PC disks.

Note that, over time, Macs do tend to “corrupt” PC formatted disks. Use them for sending and receiving files, but use Macintosh formatted disks for your daily work.

**E-mail.** Files can be sent as attachments in e-mail. In rare cases the receiver may not be using an e-mail program capable of receiving attachments. Also, some e-mail programs that can receive attachments require special knowledge on the part of the user in order to download the attachment. You might be wise to send a test attachment and make sure your receiver(s) can open it before you send the actual document.

**PDF files.** PDF stands for Portable Document Format. Adobe created this format so that documents could be preserved with all images, formatting, and even the fonts intact. The reader for PDF files, Acrobat Reader, is available without charge. This means a document saved in PDF is not vulnerable to translation errors and is readable by anyone who has downloaded and installed Acrobat Reader.

So far PDF files have found common usage on web pages and software CD’s (the manuals and other “read me” documents are often PDF files). To create a PDF file you will need to purchase and install Adobe Acrobat on your computer.