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FontAgent Pro 4

by L. Davenport

FontAgent Pro is a font maintenance utility. With it you can optimize, organize, activate, and deactivate fonts in Mac OS X.

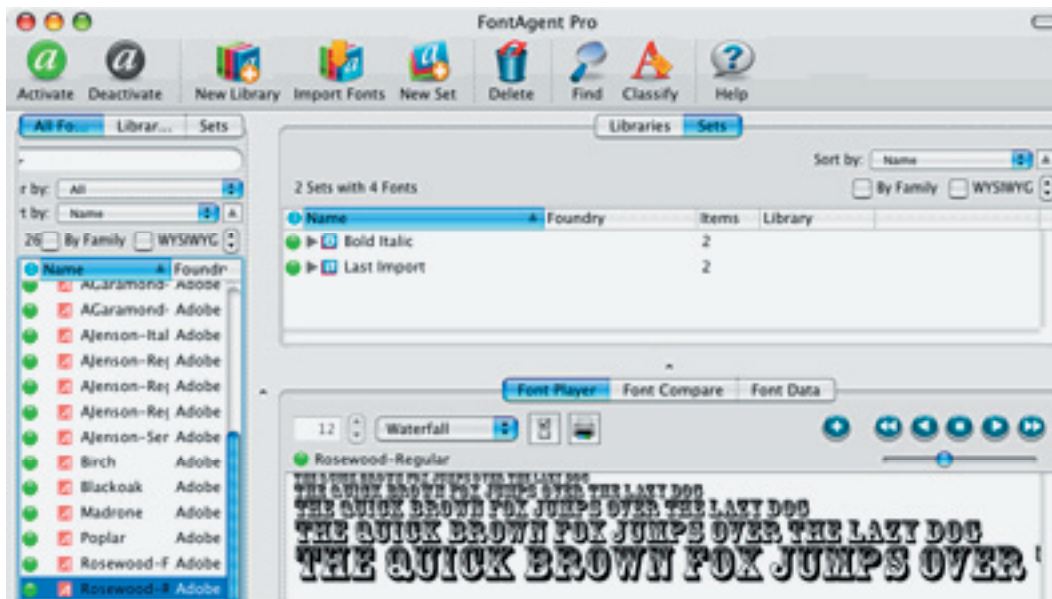
If you are relatively new to the Mac, you may wonder whether you need a font management utility. Well, if you pull down your fonts menu and only a handful of fonts appear-you probably don't need this program. But on the other hand, if when you pull down your font menu you see a long line of fonts listed-you need this program. "Why?" You ask.

Fonts that are incomplete, corrupt, or duplicates can cause your Mac to act up or crash. Even if they are well-behaved, your computer can become sluggish if you have a large font library installed. FontAgent Pro (from now on: FAP) can check for these problems when you first bring your fonts into FAP. You can also use FAP to activate your commonly used fonts-leaving the rest to be activated only when needed.

A Setup Assistant pops up when you first run FAP. It lets you specify where you want your fonts stored and it checks to see if you have Adobe or Quark programs installed. If you do, it gives you the option to install Auto-activation plug-ins (the plug-ins are necessary since both Quark and Adobe apps use proprietary font activation functionality-different than most Mac OS X applications).

FAP can automatically turn on fonts for a specific application e.g. I have created a System Re-install manual that reminds me how to re-install some of my temperamental applications along with what preferences need to be set for each application. I use a Keycaps font that shows a small depiction of the keys that need to be pressed such as the command-option-s keys. I only need this font activate when I work in this manual. I can either turn on this font manually (from within FAP), or I can have FAP automatically activate this font when I am working on the manual and then de-activate it the next time I reboot (or I can manually deactivate it at any time).

Once FAP is up and running it is a simple matter of dragging your font folders onto the FAP window.



FontAgent Pro's four-part main window.

When you do, FAP asks you for the Destination Library. It also gives you options to: Check font metrics to determine exact duplicates, Do not import incomplete PostScript fonts, Activate the fonts, Show a Report, Profile fonts, and whether to Delete original fonts (When FAP imports the fonts it breaks them up into individual font files and stores them in the location that you previously set). After making your selections, FAP chugs away importing the fonts.

If there are any "Problem" fonts (ones that failed the integrity test), FAP will move them to a Problems folder, thus keeping them separate from the rest of the "Good" fonts.

When FAP is finished importing the fonts and if you chose the Reports option, it will create a Report that details what happened during the importing process. I was surprised when it found problem fonts in my imported fonts.

When completed, all of the fonts are listed on the left side of the FAP window. Next to each font is a dot. If you selected the option to "Activate after importing" - all the dots will be green. If not, all will be grey. Simply click on the fonts you want to use on a regular basis, hit the Activate button, and from then on these fonts will be available to use. The rest will just sit there waiting for the occasional times that you will need them.

FYI: If you choose the "Manage System Fonts" option, FAP can manage the System fonts found in the /Library/Fonts folder (but not the fonts found in the /System/Library/Fonts folder). This makes it handy for individuals who would like to use their PostScript version of fonts like Optima, rather than the TrueType version that came with the OS X install disk. Simply de-activate the TrueType version and activate your PostScript version. But be aware- the "Manage System Fonts" option only works if you only have



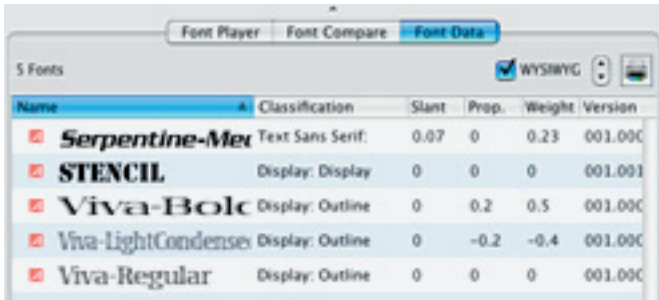
A Summary Report was generated when I imported my fonts. As you can see-it found twenty nine missing or duplicate fonts.



one user installed on your Mac (since these fonts are moved and no longer available to multiple users).

When you click on the fonts in the FAP window, you can see them in their actual type faces (for quick identification). There are four different ways to display your fonts:

- 1) ABC123 displays the alphabet from A-Z, the Numbers 0-9,



In the Preview window you can view your fonts in their actual typeface and view the Font Data.



FontAgent Pro has a powerful Find tool that can find fonts on your computer and on the Internet.

and a simple text line.

- 2) Paragraph- displays the font in a paragraph form (though the words are really gibberish),

- 3) Waterfall- displays five lines of text at varying sizes,

- 4) Custom- lets you type the text to be displayed.

For those that like hard copies of their fonts, you can print Font Sample Sheets from any of the four aforementioned font display types.



Font Compare shows samples of your chosen fonts so you can compare and choose the best one for your current project.

FAP comes with a powerful Find tool that lets you do a "Smart Search" or a "Keyword Search". The Smart search operates similar to Apple's Find tool in that it has multiple search criteria that you can set. You can search for: Shared, Activation status, Font weight, width, slant, or by Font Metrics, You can even search for "Damaged" fonts.

The Keyword search lets you search for keywords that describe the font's appearance, e.g. Western. As an added benefit, the Keyword Search not only searches your computer, but it can also find fonts on the internet.

FAP supports Macintosh TrueType, Type 1 PostScript, Windows TrueType, OpenType, dfont, etc. (but not double-byte fonts such as Asian language fonts). 



FontAgent Pro can print Font Sample books.

The Skinny

Evaluation: The ability to de-activate fonts is a real plus for those that have large font libraries. This way you can have your rarely used fonts de-activated, but readily available for the few times that you need them. I also like FontAgent Pro's ability to check the integrity of your fonts and its Find feature.

I compared FontAgent Pro with Apples Fontbook and though some of the features were similar, FontAgent Pro had more options and found more problem fonts in the batch of fonts that I tested it on. So it won the competition in my estimation. But download the demo and check for yourself to see if FontAgent would better suit your needs.

Requires: Mac OS X 10.3 or later-including Leopard, Intel or PPC Mac

Company: Insider Software

Street Price: \$99.95

Available demo