

## Organize Your Hard Drive Like Your Desk

by Craig Savage

The hard drive is your computer's filing cabinet. All of your applications — Microsoft Works, Claris CAD, Microsoft Excel — and all of the documents created by those applications — letters, drawings, spreadsheets — are stored on the hard drive in "folders." Like the real manila versions, folders can hold applications (programs), documents, or both. You can put folders in other folders, and those in still other folders until you are totally lost. Because you will live or die by your folder storage system, it's important to have a good one.

You should base your hard drive folder system on the way you currently organize all the paper in your office. Mine is simple, and it

works for me because it reflects my own organizational habits. It's easy to do on the Mac because you can duplicate the paper documents and folders lying on your desk on the computer screen or "desktop."

### A Place for Everything

I have six folders that reside permanently on my Mac desktop (see Figure 1). I have "dragged" them out of the hard disk icon and arranged for them to appear on screen whenever I start up the computer. In a folder called *Applications*, I store a dozen or so programs, two or three of which I use frequently. This folder remains "open" on my desktop so I can quickly "launch" any application I need.

The *Construction* folder contains all of my company's business documents, except those for accounting, which I keep in the *Accounting* folder. The *Other Business* folder holds non-construction documents, and the *Misc Articles* and *Forms Book* folders contain the text and drawings for a book I am writing.

### Follow The Path

When I turn on the Mac and sit down to work on construction business, the first thing I do is open the *Construction* folder to display the four folders it contains. Each folder has a name, which helps me identify its contents, and a number, which I can use to determine where it is displayed in the list.

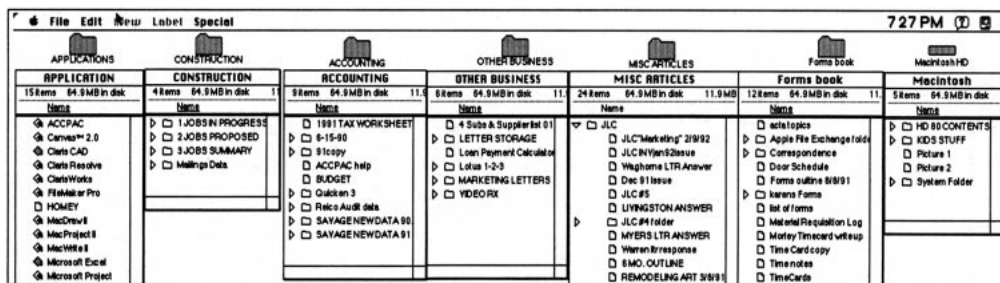


Figure 1. Six folders are always present on the author's "desktop." They hold groups of applications, documents, and other folders that logically relate to each other.

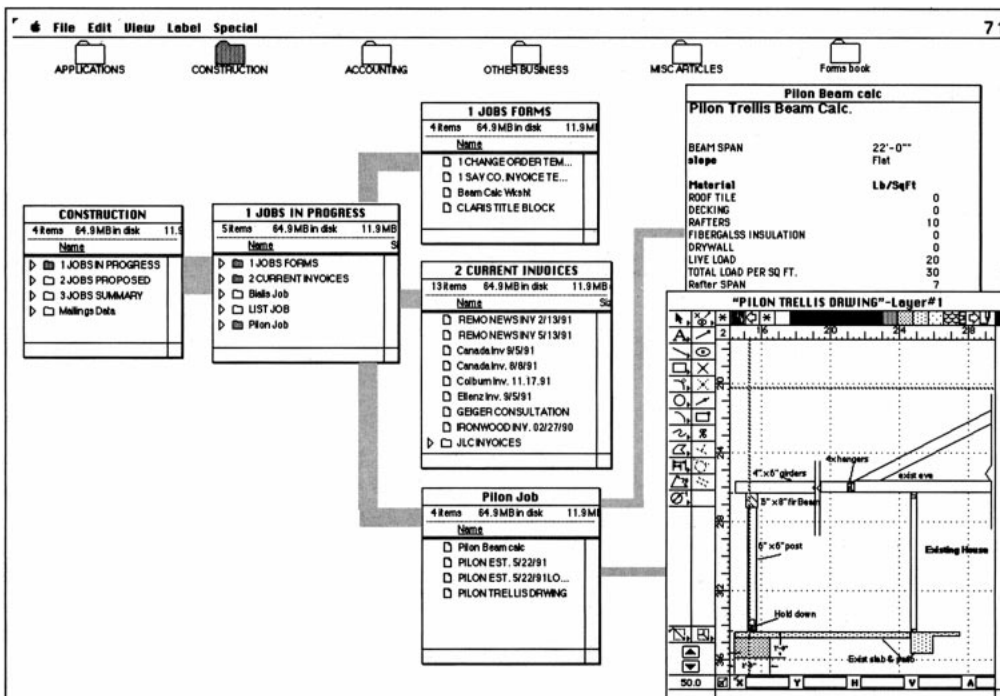


Figure 2. Opening several folders at once on the Mac desktop gives you quick access to many applications and documents. The dotted lines show the organizational "path" of the folders and their contents.

In each case, I have created a logical "path" to get to the documents I need. The path begins with the folders stored in the construction folder. These organize jobs into three categories: proposed, in progress, or finished (a summary).

When I open the folder labeled *Jobs in Progress*, for example, it displays five more folders (Figure 2). Together they contain everything I need to manage a job that is currently under way. Each folder contains documents of a specific kind. The *Jobs Forms* folder, for example, holds standard templates for documents, including change orders, invoices, a beam calculation worksheet, and a title block for shop drawings. I keep the *Current Invoices* folder here, too, but it would also make sense to put it in the *Accounting* folder.

Finally, the three folders labeled with client names contain all of the documents pertaining to each of those jobs. Whether they are estimates made in Excel, letters written in Works, or drawings done in Claris CAD, if a document pertains to the Pilon job, for example, it lives in the *Pilon Job* folder. Two of these documents are also shown in Figure 2. One is a beam calculation worksheet from Excel; the other, a CAD drawing.

### Keep Contents Current

The remaining folders contain many of the same kinds of folders and documents, and each pertains to a specific stage of job development. Whenever I do an estimate, I create a folder, label it with the client's name, and put it in the *Jobs Proposed* folder. If I sign the work, I move the folder to *Jobs in Progress*. If I don't get the job, it goes into a *Dead Jobs* folder stored in the *Job Summary* folder.

My other business goes into other folders, and so will yours. The thing to remember as you begin to computerize is simply to try to duplicate in the computer what you are doing at your desk. If you use a certain paper form for estimating, copy it into Excel. It won't take long, you will learn a little about Excel, and you will have a better-looking estimate to hand to clients, perhaps with your letterhead and a logo drawn on the Mac at the top of each page. And the data will be available for future bids. But most importantly, you will be on your way to using your new tool without having to learn more than a few new tricks. ■

Craig Savage, a longtime builder and Macintosh user, owns Savage Co., in Palm Desert, Calif., and publishes the Macintosh Construction Forum.