

# After Hours Macintosh Consulting

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FAQ: When I receive some files in email from clients and friends created in an application like Quark, I occasionally can't open the document, and it has a generic text icon instead of the Quark icon. I need to get into the file; what can I do?

AH: There are a number of potential causes for this condition. And we suspect you've already looked at the related FAQ on file types and manipulation to make sure you aren't dealing with a file tag issue (see above). One cause is that your Mac's desktop is a little corrupted. The easiest solution is to rebuild the desktop. Our favorite application for doing this is TechTool, a free utility from MicroMat ([www.micromat.com](http://www.micromat.com)). Try rebuilding your desktop first, then see if the file icon is restored.

A second cause is a partially corrupted application. While it may seem a headache to spend five minutes reinstalling a fresh copy of your application (in this instance, Quark), those five minutes will be nothing compared to the days you might spend trying other solutions. Note: when reinstalling software, do NOT trash the existing application until you have all of your master disks/CDs ready for the reinstall. Nothing is more frustrating than trashing your existing program, then discovering that your masters have disappeared! Oh, and be sure to trash the preference files and support files for the application which may reside in the System Folder. If you don't feel comfortable doing this, STOP – and have us or another qualified Macintosh service firm help you before proceeding.

Those are the two easy fixes... but there are several other methods for quickly solving your problem. You may want to get Dataviz's MacLinkPlus ([www.dataviz.com](http://www.dataviz.com)). This package has a ton of translators and several useful utilities, such as Document Converter and FileView. A wonderful package, and well-worth having in your application utility arsenal.

For the fearless, there is another solution: Apple's own ResEdit. Beware: this program is not for idle messing around. Improper use can corrupt files and render your Mac in an awful shape. But if you follow the next few instructions, you should be able to correct the missing document icon. We'll use our Quark example above, complete with pictures.

First, obtain a copy of ResEdit from Apple's website ([www.apple.com](http://www.apple.com)). Download the software, decompress it, and place the ResEdit folder in a favorite spot for your utilities (we use our Utilities folder).

Next, find the files that you need to reset back to their original state. **IT IS A SMART IDEA TO WORK ONLY FROM COPIES OF THE ORIGINAL FILE.** Resist the temptation to simply double-click on a file which arrives via attachment or on removable media without knowing exactly what it is. Doing so can lead to a corrupt file – and if it is your only copy, you'll have to go back to the sender or the source and request another copy. This is time-consuming and inefficient. Train yourself to make backup copies of any unknown file before doing anything else with them! O.K., 'nuf said on that.

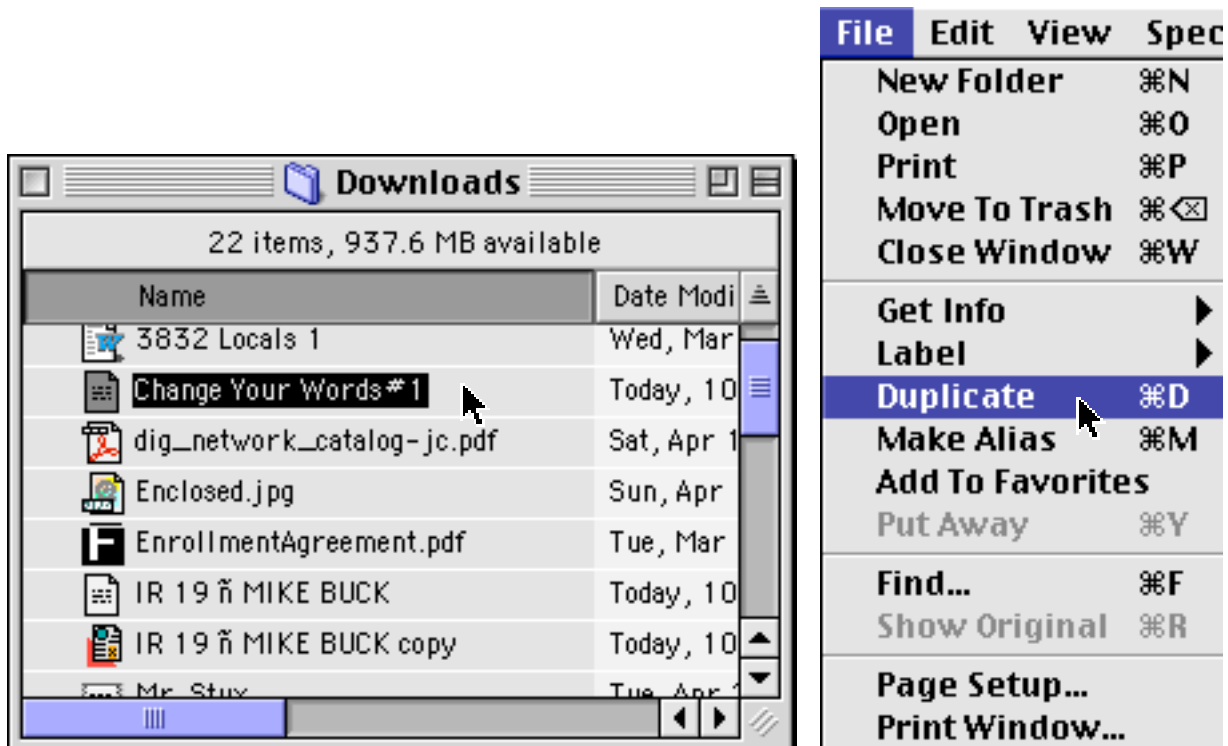
Please note: these techniques apply to OS 9 or earlier, only.

On the next few pages, we will review the entire process:

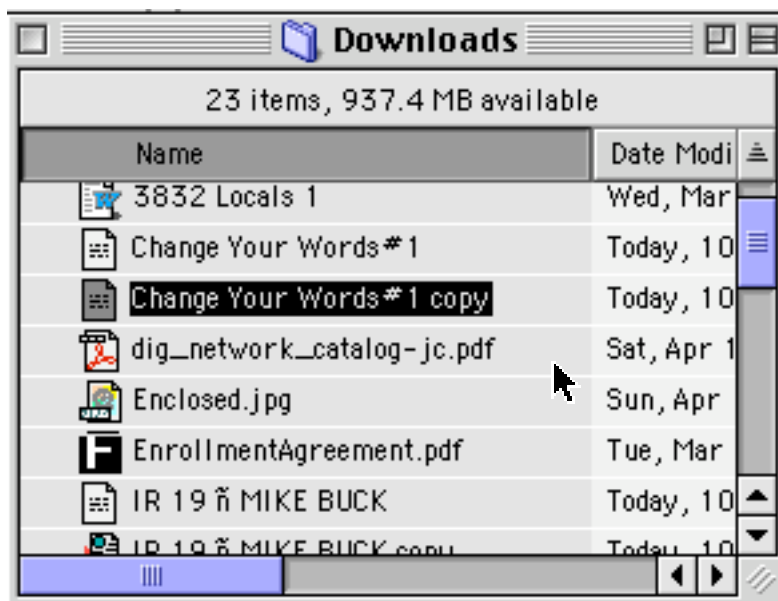
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In this example, we have a file called “Change Your Words#1” from an email download. Highlight the file with a single click, then select Duplicate from the File menu (our shorthand for this command is **File:Duplicate**)



A copy of the original should appear (see the figure below). It is this copy which we will use for all of our tests and conversions, leaving the original alone.



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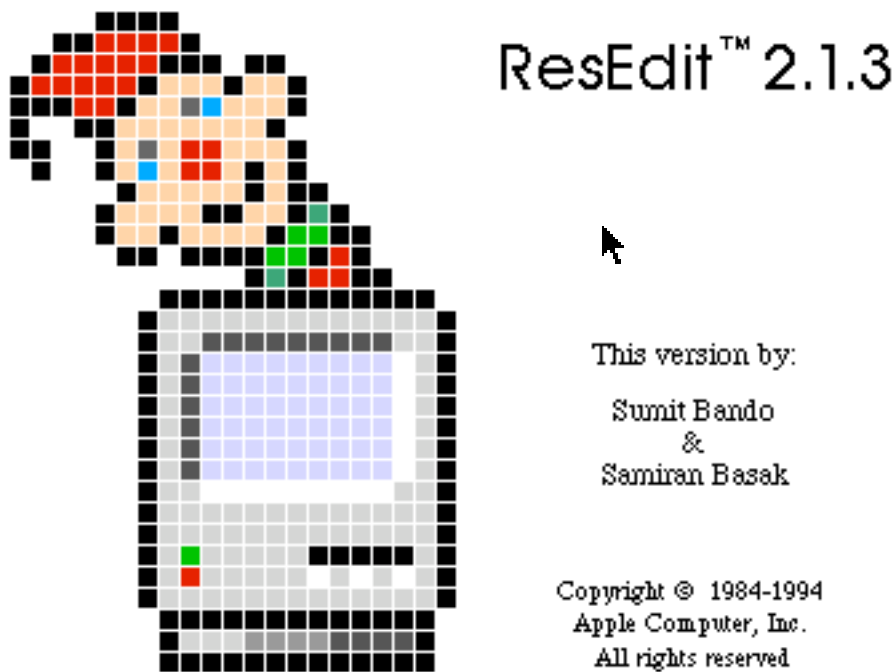
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Now, we have learn a bit about how the Mac knows what kind of file each file is. This is the short course:

Macs use two (hidden) file tags to note what a file is: a TYPE and a CREATOR code. These are four-character codes held within each file on the Mac. The TYPE code tells what “type” of file something is (say, a text document), while the CREATOR code tells what kind of application created the document (AppleWorks, Quark, etc.). There is a bit more to these codes, but that’s enough to know for now.

From our conversations with the sender of the above example document, we know that this document is supposed to be a Quark document. We don’t see any file name suffixes (like .SIT or .HQX which would tell us the file is compressed with Stuffit or in a BinHex (Unix) internet format which would require conversions. [Note: if you did see these codes in a file name, you should review our FAQ on file conversion, see our website]

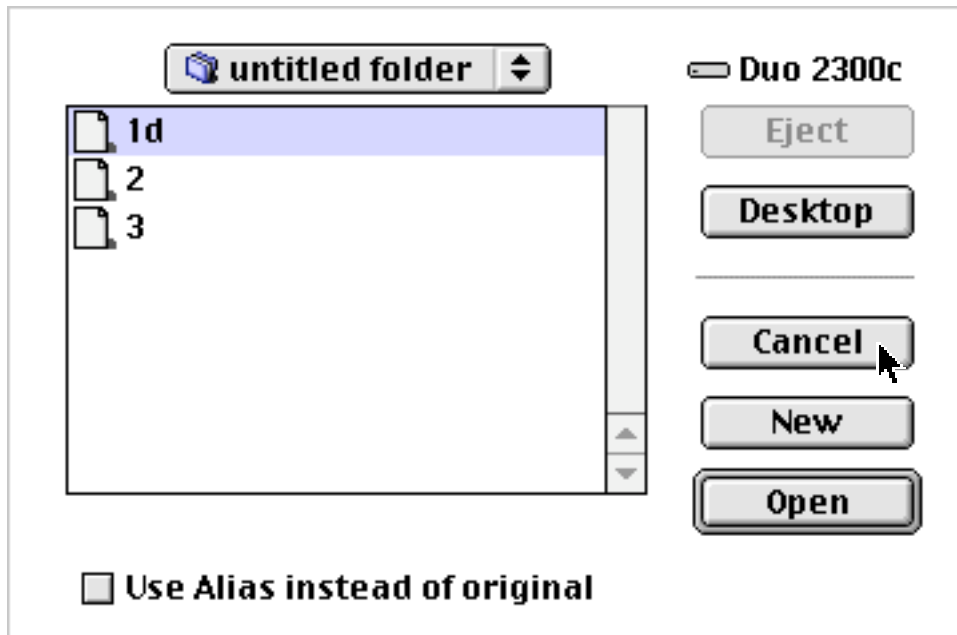
All we see is a TeachText (SimpleText) document icon. Let’s take a look inside of the file with ResEdit. Launch ResEdit, and you’ll receive a splash screen like this:



Click once on the splash screen to enter ResEdit. Now, ResEdit is a programming tool for applications on the Mac. It will expect that you want to open a program to alter the application’s code and WE CERTAINLY DO NOT WANT TO DO THAT HERE. So, see the next page.

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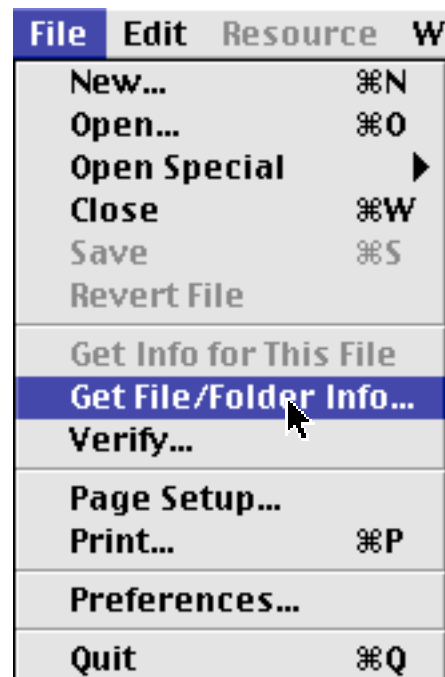


When you clicked on the splash screen, the Jack-in-a-Box disappeared, to be replaced with the window above. We are NOT OPENING AN APPLICATION WITH ResEdit, so select the Cancel button, as above.

The window will disappear, but you are still in ResEdit. It's time to open our duplicate copy of the mystery file.

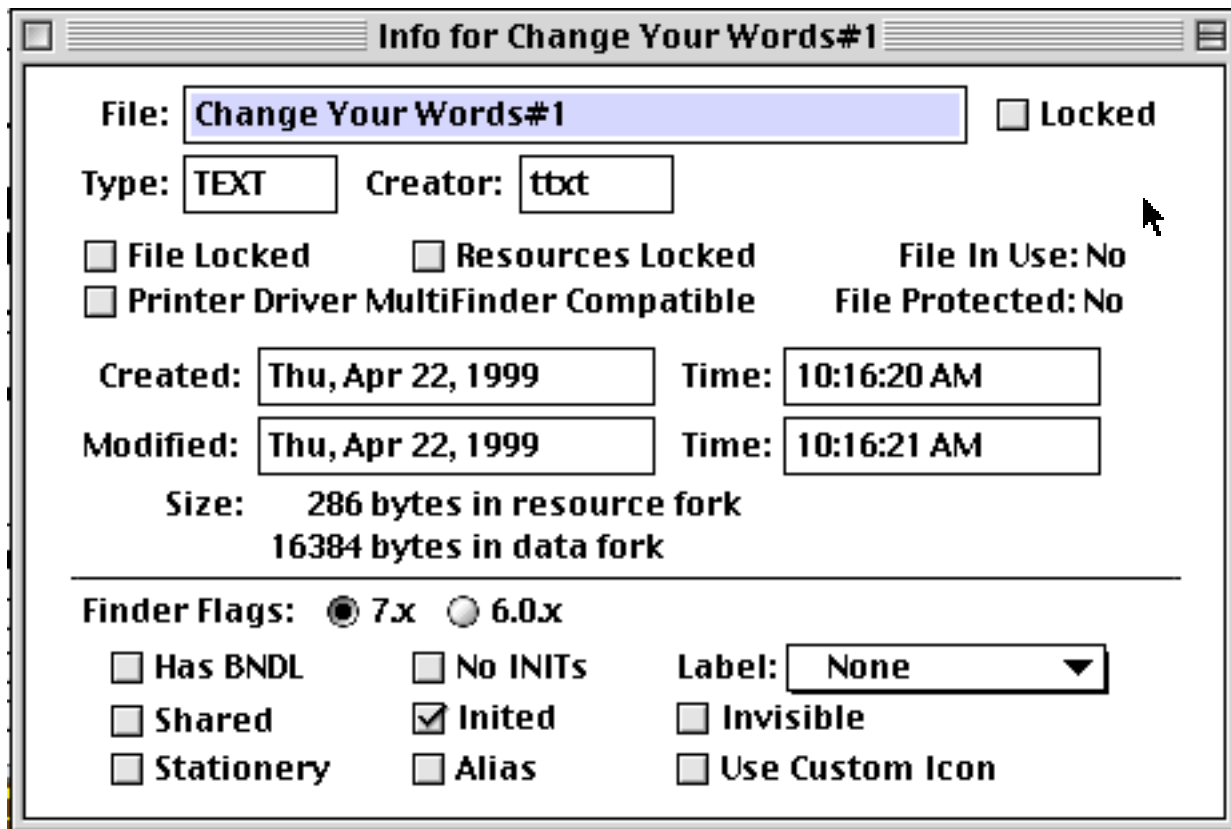
Select **File:Get File/Folder Info...** as shown to the right. A dialog box will appear where you will need to navigate to your Downloads folder (or wherever your mystery file lives).

Select the mystery file...



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A new window appears as shown above. Note that the name of the file is given, along with a lot of other information. Do not disturb any of the settings, except for the characters in the Type and Creator boxes. In the example above, we see these four-digit settings are in different cases. These settings are CASE-SENSITIVE, so be sure to pay attention to them. The settings above are for a SimpleText/TeachText document, which is why our mystery file is assigned that icon by the Finder.

Now, chances are, you don't know the proper settings for a Quark document. How would you find these settings? Well, there are charts available giving these assignments off of the web, including from our website. But the easiest way to check for the proper settings is to open a dummy document with the proper icon.

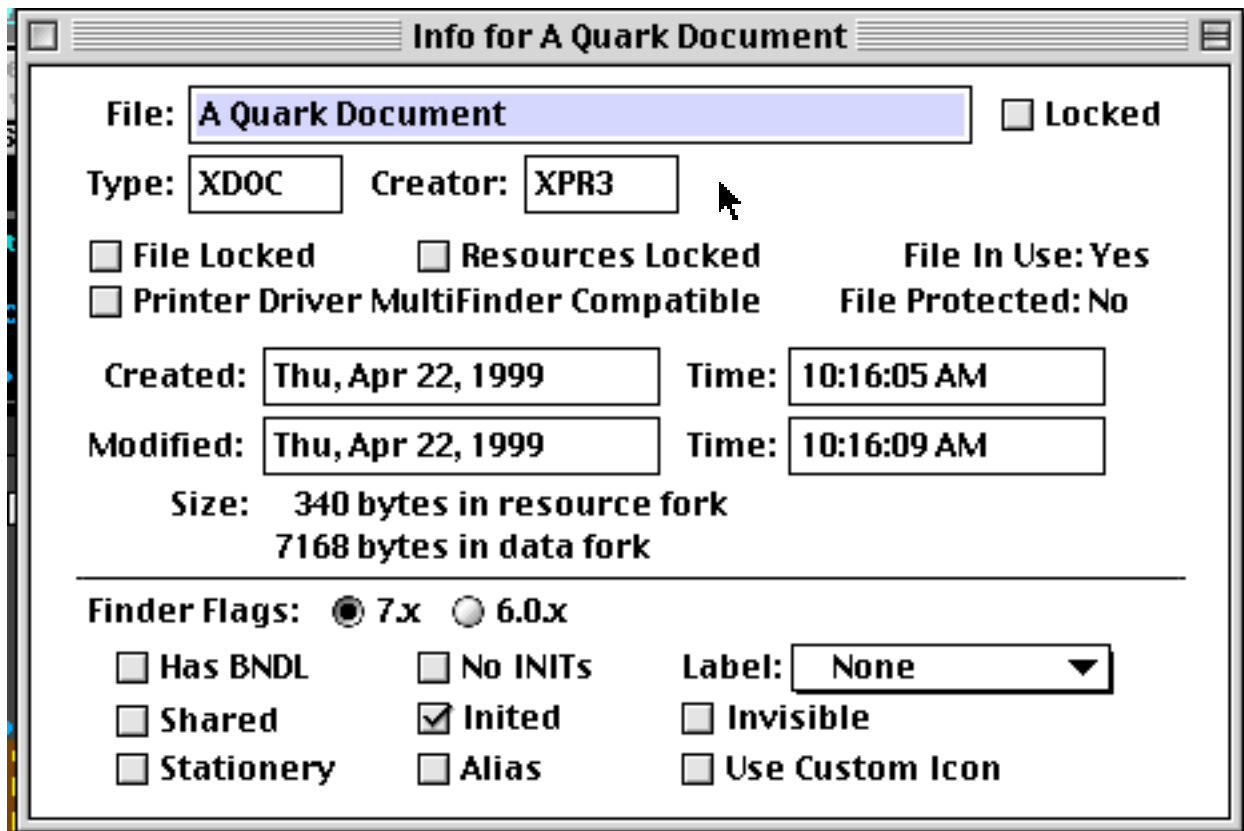
Here's how: We want to know the settings for a standard Quark document. So, we launch our Quark application and create a new document. Then, we save this document (it doesn't have to contain anything) on to the desktop. Then, we close the document. Now, return to ResEdit..

Select **File:Get File/Folder Info...**

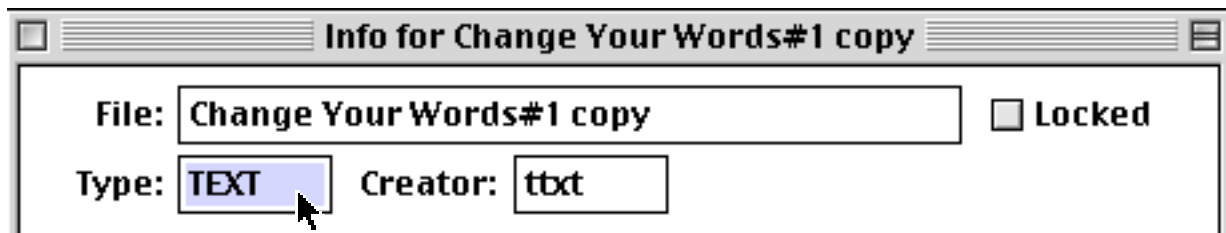
In the dialog box, navigate to the desktop and select our new dummy document. The following information appears (see next page):

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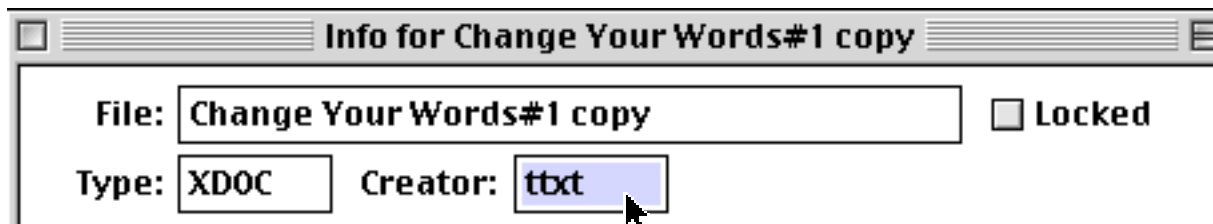
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Now, we know the proper settings for a Quark document. Let's enter those settings into the window for our mystery file. First, change the Type to match that of the Quark document.



Then, change the Creator code,

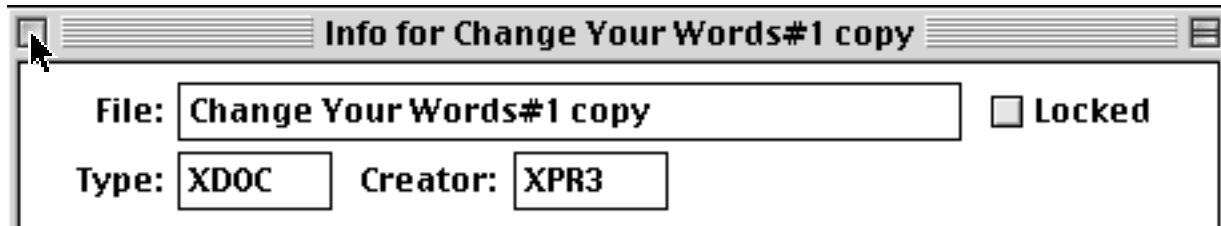


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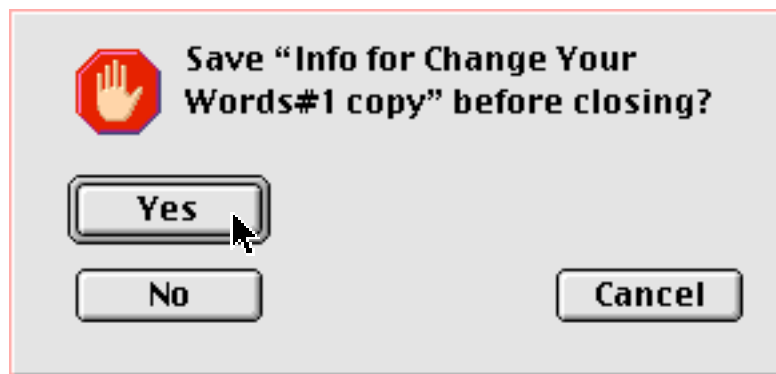
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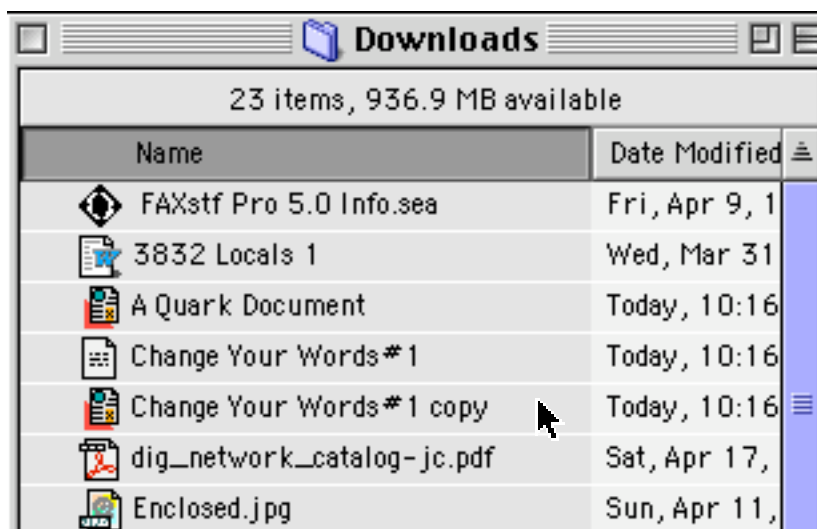
And now we have a match for the Quark settings. Close the window for the mystery document.



Your Mac will ask if you want to save these changes you have made, and of course you do, so select **Yes**.



Now, a quick look at our downloads folder reveals that the duplicate of the mystery file has a new icon... a Quark icon. Try opening this mystery document from within Quark, and see what you were missing.



A reminder: ResEdit is very powerful software. Be careful how you use it.

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