

White Icons Hell

**Or, what do I do if my Mac doesn't
know how to open a file?**

Presented by Lee Maxwell to MacFundamentals on Wednesday, 11/14/2007

Your Mac's desktop and folders are populated with lots of pretty icons.



But some icons aren't
as friendly as others.

Ever see any of these?



- * This one is a generic document icon.

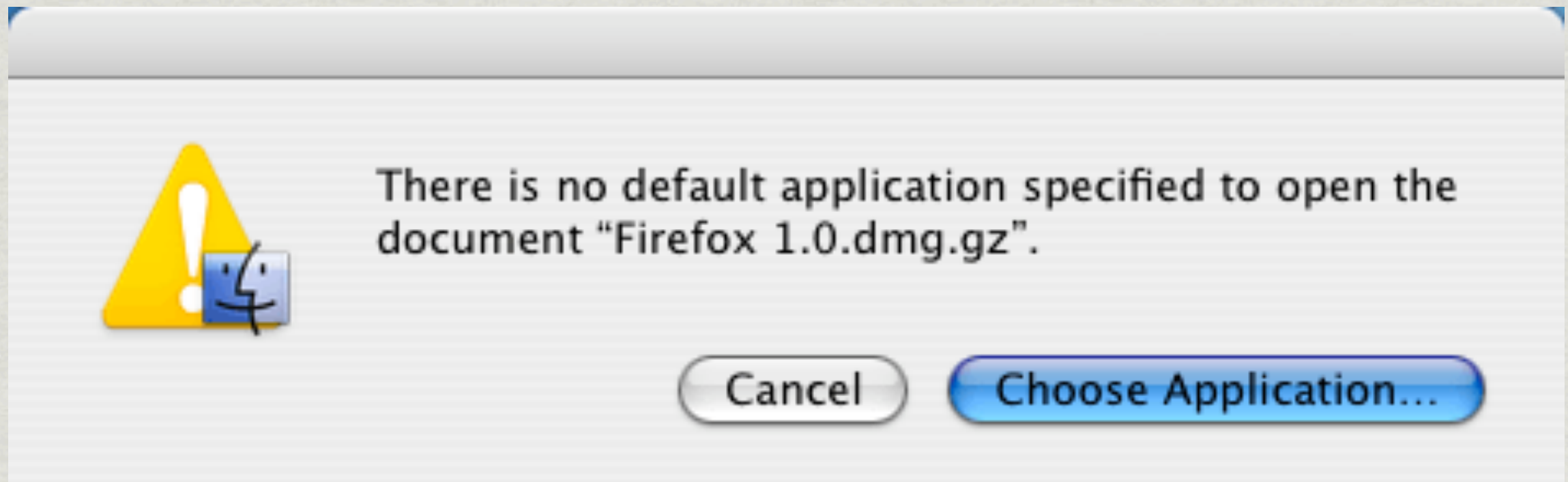


- * This one is a generic application icon.



- * This is a locked generic document icon.

This is usually what happens when you double-click one of them...



What does this mean?

- ✱ It means that your Mac doesn't know which application to call on to open this document.
- ✱ Most documents on your hard drive should be able to be opened by at least one application installed on your Mac.
- ✱ Some applications are designed to open more than one type of file.
- ✱ Mac OS X keeps a database of which applications can open which file types.

Why are these files on my Mac?

- * Some files, including many used by the operating system, may lack specific icons, so generic icons are used.
- * Files downloaded from the internet sometimes come without the file icon information attached to them, especially if they also don't have a three- or four-letter suffix at the end of the file name.
- * Legacy files from Mac OS 9 or earlier could lack the information necessary for Mac OS X to assign a file type and icon.
- * Also, if an application should quit or freeze unexpectedly, a file opened by that app could end up with a generic icon.

Files like these downloaded from the internet could be dangerous.

- * Attempts have been made – albeit clumsily – to hide a Unix Trojan Horse in a file. A generic icon can be a tip-off that a downloaded file is not trustworthy.
- * Tiger, ever since its introduction, has included software called Download Validation, that checks a file downloaded by Safari or iChat for signs it isn't what it may appear to be, and warn you it detects a problem and offers you the chance to delete the file before it is downloaded.

If I'm sure a file is safe, and I wish to give it another icon, what do I do?

- * First, we assume you know what kind of file format it should be, and you know which application you think should be able to open it.
- * Second, you should probably click once on its name to select it and add the proper suffix to the file name.
- * Just be sure you know which suffix you want to add to the end of the file name.



Adding or changing the suffix to a file name brings up the following...



Are you sure you want to add the extension ".clr" to the end of the name?

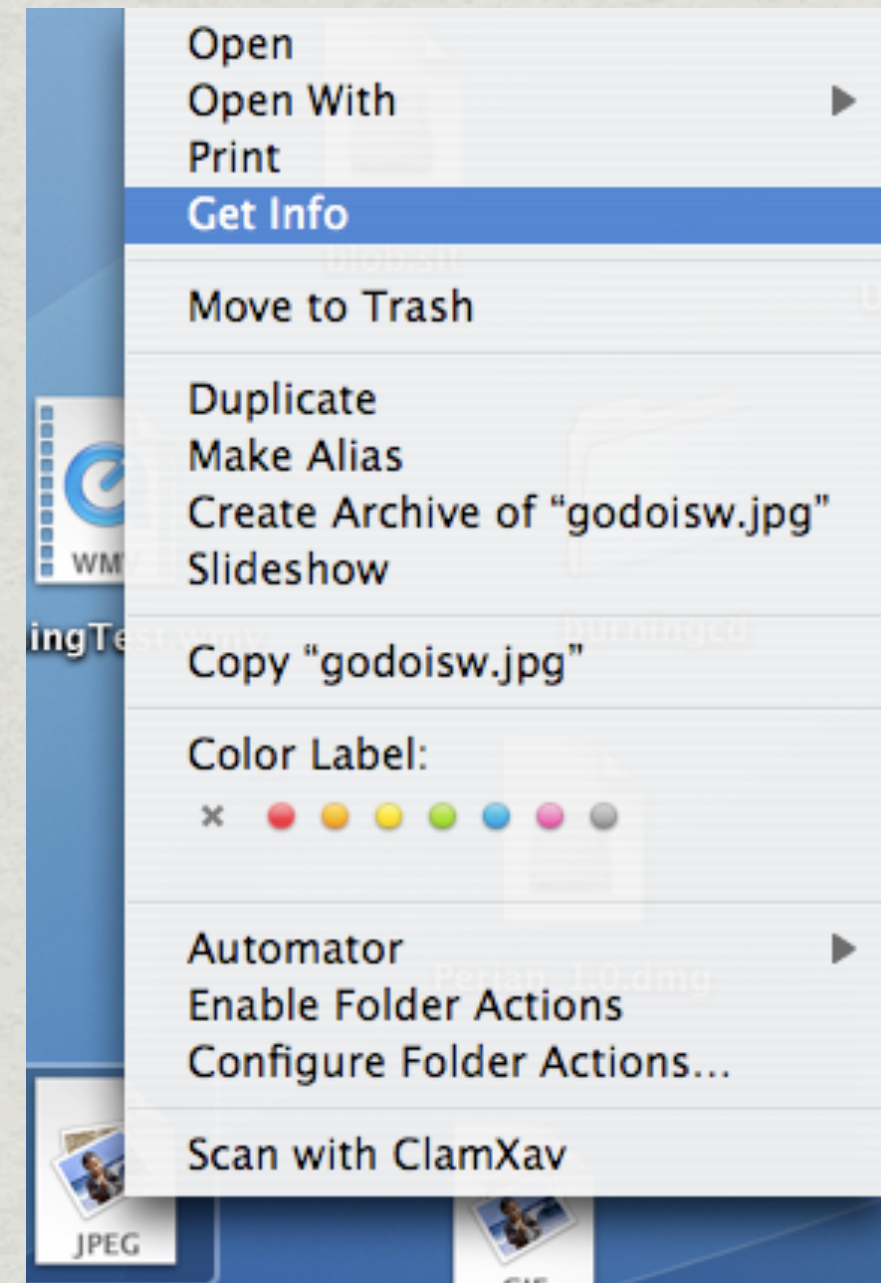
If you make this change, your folder may appear as a single file.

Add

Don't Add

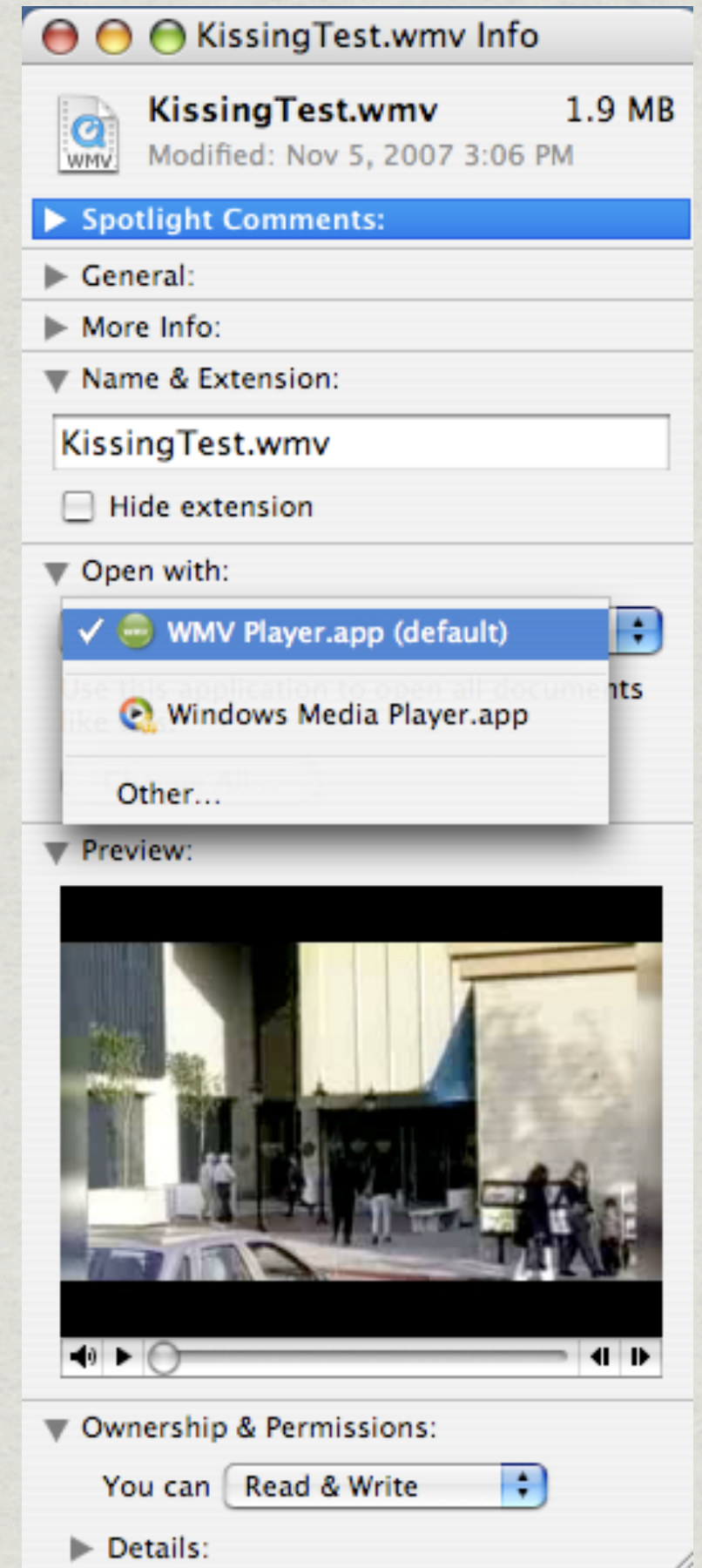
The other thing to do is get info...

- * You can use the Get Info panel to change which application is designated to open this file.
- * First, select the icon of the file you would like to change.
- * Next, go to File > Get Info... in order to open the Get Info panel.



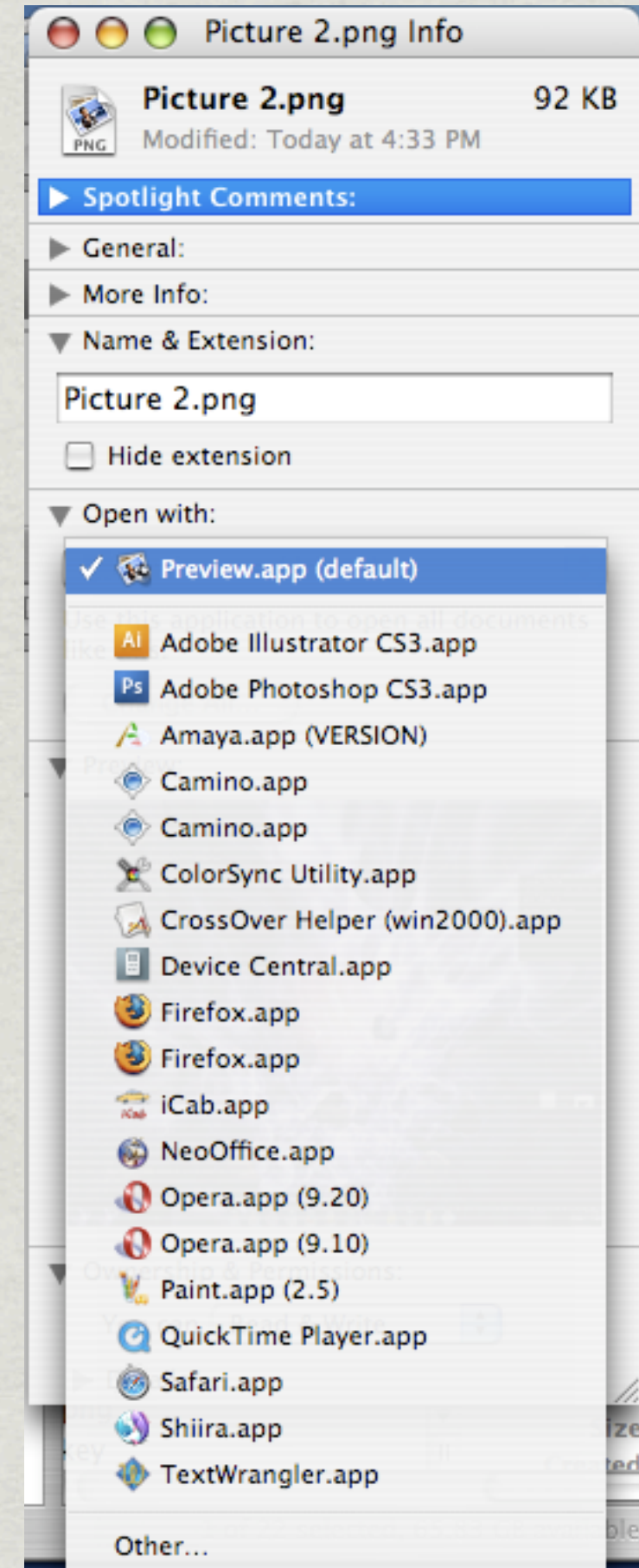
In Get Info, find the Open With... section

- * This section shows you which application, if any, is set to automatically open the document, if you were to double-click on it.
- * You can also choose another application from the pop-up menu to open this file.



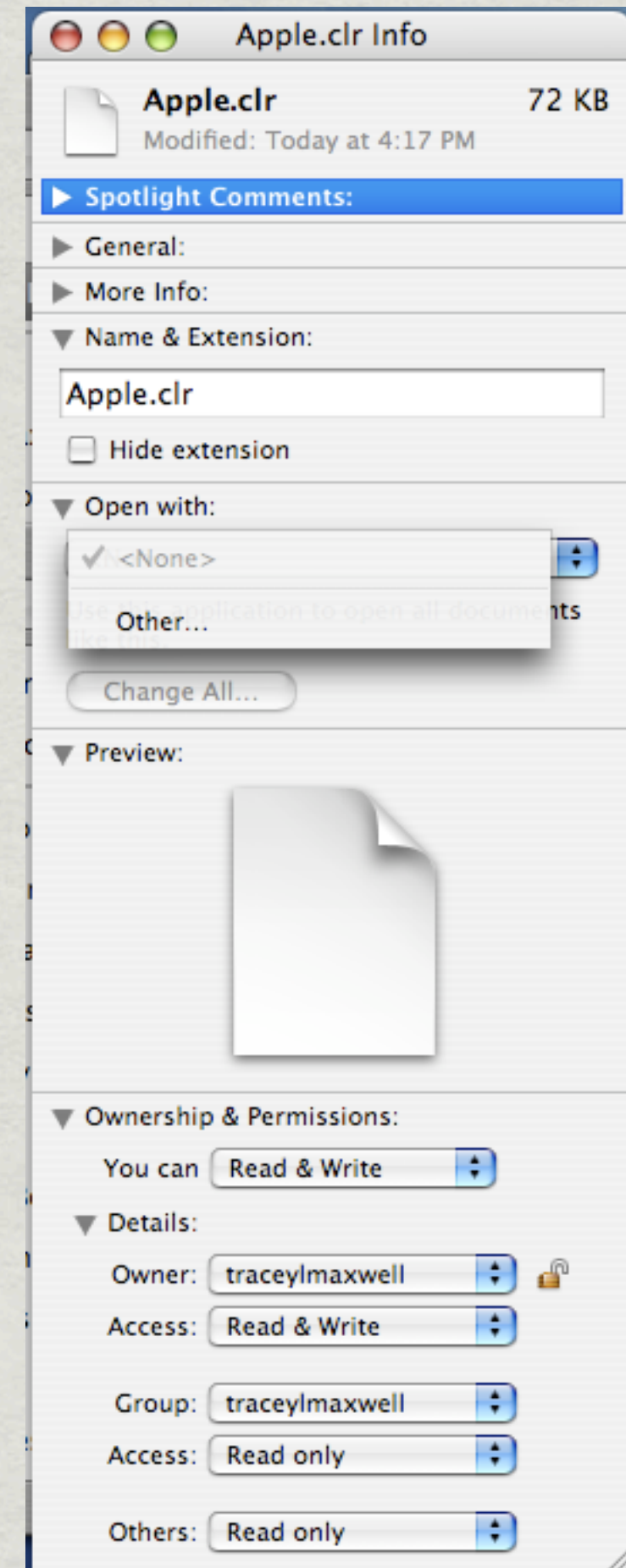
It's nice to be a .png...

- * Some documents are very popular, with lots of suitor applications...
- * Almost always there is an other command, which lets you choose an application not in the list...



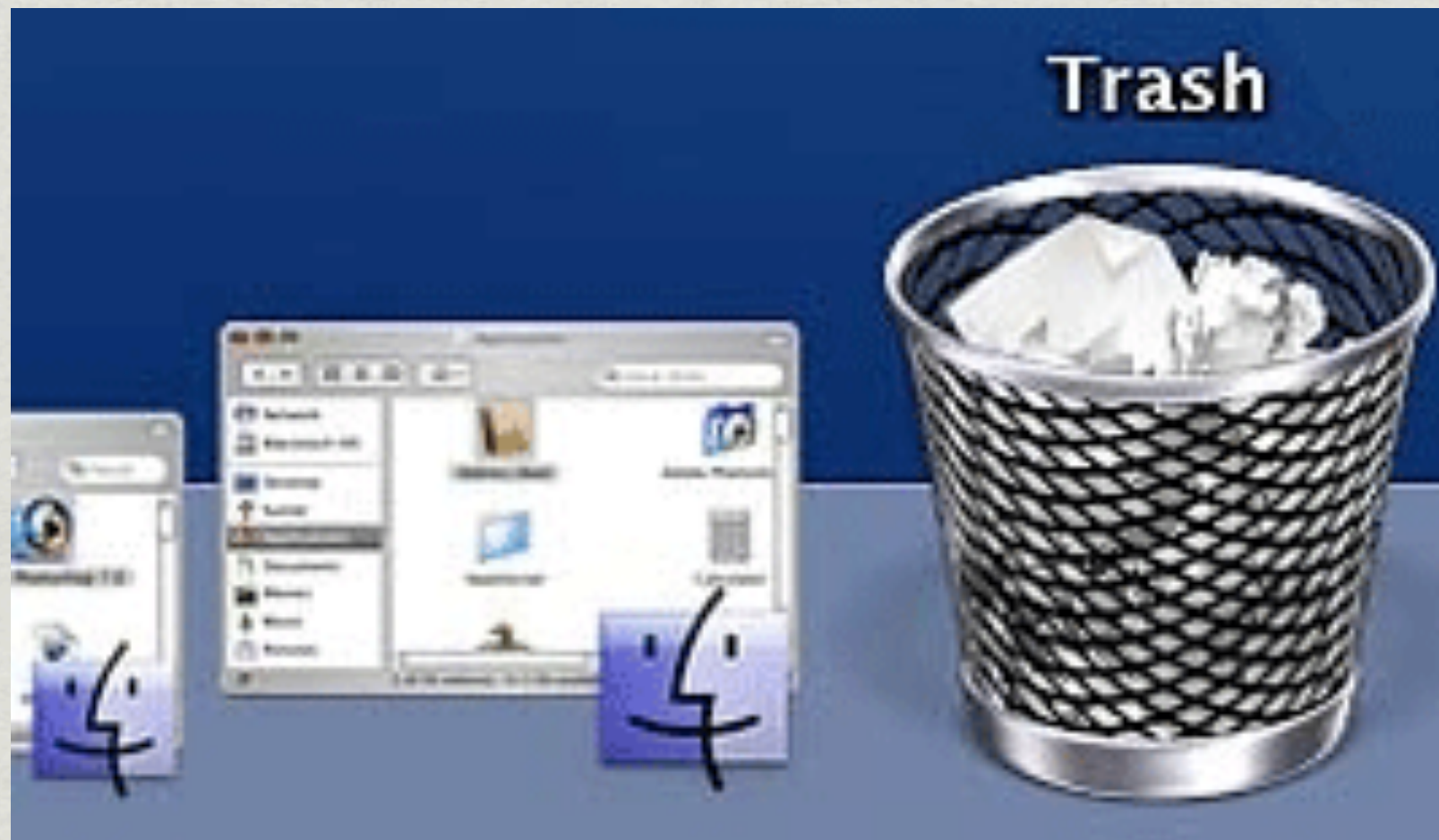
However, if there is no choice...

- * You have to use the other command to choose an application.
- * Choosing an application to open a file doesn't always help, especially if the app can't open this file.



If nothing else works...

- ✱ There always is the final destination for all problem files...



Thanks for
watching!

