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HyperCard: Problems Sending Sounds On AppleTalk

Revised: 5/25/89
Security: Everyone

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This article last reviewed: 14 April 1989

Reports have appeared of problems with HyperCard sending sounds over a network. The sounds break up badly when they arrive at a workstation. This includes sounds accessed from CD-ROM. Also, network performance slows noticeably when sounds are being transmitted.

Some people have guessed that the breakup of the sound is due to clipping of packets, but this is not the case. If packets were being clipped, there would be no sound played at all. When AppleTalk receives an incomplete packet, it throws the packet away and requests a retry. If the packet is thrown away, HyperCard would never know the packet had been sent.

The breakup is due to the sounds being shipped in packets. In tests, the sound starting and stopping correlates to the beginning and the ending of packets. This is especially true with longer sounds, such as musical passages.

Applications used across the network need to take into account the limits of the network. Other performance difficulties have appeared in other applications not designed for network access. Ethernet speed may solve this particular issue. However, to achieve the best performance, an application needs to be designed for the network environment. Long, digitized sounds being transmitted over the network are less than ideal for network-application design.

One approach to using long music passages in HyperCard is to keep the music passages on local storage. HyperCard looks first for the requested resource in the stack, next it looks in the Home card, then in HyperCard itself, and finally in the system. If the required sounds are installed in a local Home stack, the breaking up of the sound does not happen. If these sounds are stored locally, you must remove them from the stack residing on the server. Because HyperCard looks at the current stack first, the sounds in the server stack are used, unless removed.

If the applications have not been optimized for multiuser network access, a drop in network performance would not be unusual. Additionally, the AppleCD SC has a slower access time than the typical hard drive that is used as an AppleShare server.

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Tech Info Library Article Number:3830