

Some Practical Experiences Using WIF on a Macintosh

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I recently found myself in a bit of a predicament in teaching digital weave design to a group of students who would eventually weave their designs on a Macomber air-assisted loom in the textile studio at my university. I am most experienced in using Swiftweave, a Mac program, both to design for and also to drive a doobby loom, and the studio owns several copies of it. Some of Swiftweave's capabilities seemed particularly valuable for students to learn, including block substitution, as well as the ability to save different treadling segments and interleave them for pickup use on the computer-assisted loom. However, since Swiftweave does not have a loom driver for the Macomber loom, Weavemaker One is being used to operate it.

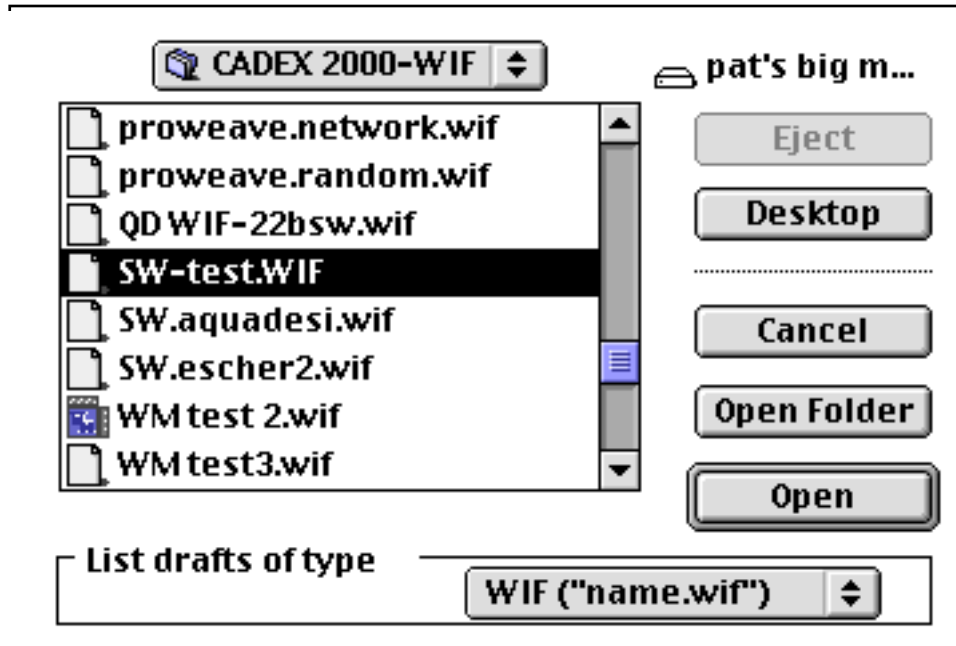
The WIF format offered a solution to this dilemma. Students could design Summer and Winter files in Swiftweave, for example, taking advantage of its block substitution capability, and then transfer them to Weavemaker One for actual weaving. Working with Version 5.1.7 of Swiftweave and Version 4.16 of Weavemaker One, I quickly discovered that things were not always as they seem. However, I was very fortunate in this instance, as the transfer of weave structures from Swiftweave to Weavemaker via WIF worked very well.

To open a WIF file in Swiftweave, simply choose Open in the File menu. Any WIF file that can be opened by Swiftweave appears in the dialogue box for you to select.

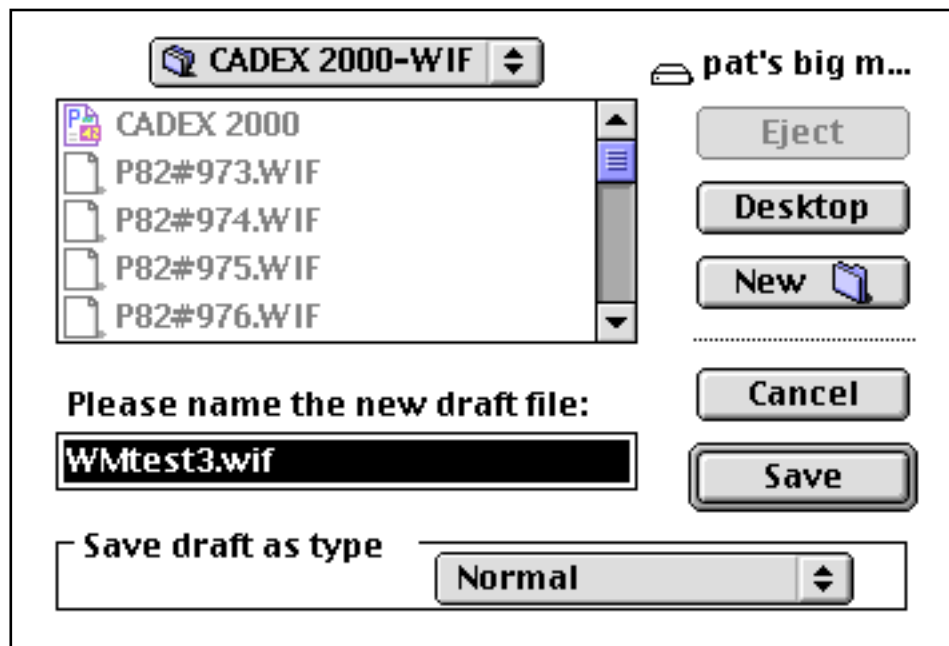
To export a Swiftweave design in the WIF format, choose Export in the File menu. You will then see this box, and can select WIF in the Export File Type pop-down menu :



To open a WIF file in Weavemaker One, simply choose Open in the File menu. A dialogue box will appear with a pop-down menu that allows you to choose WIF as the type of draft you wish to open (see the dialogue box at the top of the next page). This works fine with Swiftweave WIF files but, unfortunately, not at all with ProWeave WIF files. (However, if you first use QD WIF to convert ProWeave WIF files to the WeaveMaker format, all is well.)



To export a WIF file in Weavemaker One, choose Export as WIF in the File menu, and save the file without making any choices in the Save draft as type popdown menu that appears. (Dana Cartwright, programmer of WeaveMaker, intends to remove that confusing popdown box in the next release of the software.) Your weaving file will be nicely saved with a .wif suffix. When you open it in Swiftweave, the warp and weft threads will all be 8 pixels wide. You can easily change those thread widths in Swiftweave. However, if you use QD WIF to convert the .wif file first to the WMK and then to the WIF format, Swiftweave opens it with the proper threads widths.



Other information that I discovered in preparing to teach the class, and in testing the software for this article:

The weaving files on Eleanor Best's CD of 7,000 Weaves, saved in WIF 1.1, are easily opened by both Swiftweave and Weavemaker One.

JacqCADMaster, jacquard weave design software on the Macintosh platform, also works with WIF files. This allows you to design as usual in regular weaving software that can export WIF files, and then use the results in a more complex weaving situation.

Swiftweave opens ProWeave WIF files with each warp and weft thread 8 pixels wide. Once you change the thread widths to 1 pixel, the file appears normally.

Although Weavemaker cannot open ProWeave WIF files directly, it handles them fine if you first use QD WIF to translate them into the Weavemaker format.

The WIF site, located at <<http://www.mhsoft.com/wif/wif.html>>, has WIF test files for several weaving programs, including ProWeave and Swiftweave, as well as complete information about WIF. The most recent version of QD WIF can be downloaded at <http://www.softweave.com/html/QD_WIF.html>.

Although my experiences with WIF are limited primarily to two Macintosh weaving programs, I share them as one aspect of what is likely to become a more complete picture over time. The WIF format has the potential of being very valuable, indeed, once the various weaving programs cooperate even more fully with each other.

(This article was written using Pagemaker, Weavemaker One, Swiftweave and QD WIF. I am grateful to Dana Cartwright and George Best for their assistance.)