

Although Lafite is a robust system, you may occasionally encounter minor problems when using it. This chapter describes the most common Lafite problems and how to prevent and/or recover from them.

Lafite Confuses You With a Previous User

If you log into Lafite with the correct name and password but the Browse menu shows no folders or shows someone else's folders, Lafite may be confusing you with a previous user. If you are running in a sysout in which someone else has been using Lafite, you need to take some action to get Lafite to work on your mail files and in your name. When you change the user identity by logging in as yourself, Lafite notices that the current user has changed and attempts to authenticate you. However, Lafite still doesn't know how you want your Lafite customized; in particular, what your known mail folders are.

To get Lafite to recognize your identity, you should first turn Lafite off by choosing Quit from the status window or by calling (LAFITE 'OFF). Then log in again. Type (GREET) in the executive window; you will be asked for the name of your initialization file if there isn't one on your workstation's disk. When this has been loaded, restart Lafite.

File Server Is Slow

If your mail files are stored on a remote file server that is particularly unresponsive, the mail server connection over which new mail is retrieved may *time out* (that is, end communication with your file server) before the file server acknowledges receipt of the messages. The usual consequence of this is that your in-box is not flushed, so your new mail is in two places: your in-box, awaiting retrieval, and your mail file, to which it was just retrieved. A less common occurrence is that the mail server times out partway through the retrieval process, resulting in a Lisp break. You can type ^ after the prompt in the break window to return to the state before the Get Mail started.

If this is often a problem for you, you may want to adopt the following procedure to maintain the flexibility of remote mail files while utilizing the speed and reliability of the local disk. Keep most of your mail files on the remote server, as usual, but keep your Active Mail file, the one to which you usually retrieve mail, on your local disk. Retrieve mail to this file and dispatch from there to your remote files (using Move To) some or all of the messages you wish to keep. Mail files on disk have very predictable performance

during Get Mail, which is good for both you and the mail server. Files on disk are also less subject to other vagaries of remote servers (e.g., sudden crashes) that sometimes cause problems with mail files (see figure 27). And if you tend to delete much of your incoming mail after reading it once, you may find it faster to keep your Active Mail on disk, even if your remote server isn't unreliable.

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TTY window for ERIS #LEAF

****Warning: {ERIS}<GRIMBLE>MAIL>ACTIVE.MAIL;1
  was open for write during a file server crash; data
  may be lost

****WARNING: The file
{ERIS}<GRIMBLE>MAIL>ACTIVE.MAIL;1
  was previously opened but has disappeared!

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Figure 27. A warning window opened by Lafite after a file server crash. The folder has “disappeared” because the file server is down, therefore the mail folders on it cannot be accessed by Lafite

You can also choose to keep most or all of your mail files on disk, backing them up to a file server periodically. The Lisp Library package CopyFiles is helpful for doing the backup automatically.

Mail File Does Not Parse

The first time Lafite browses a mail folder, or any time that it suspects that the folder's table of contents is obsolete, it tries to *parse* the folder. A good mail folder consists of a set of messages, each set off by some internal information about the message's length and status. Parsing a folder consists of scanning for this internal information and building a table of contents from it. If a folder has been damaged in some way, the parsing operation fails, most commonly because a message's stated length is inconsistent with what is actually stored in the file (see figure 28). In this case, Lafite aborts the Browse command and prints a message in the browser window describing how far it got. The information Lafite prints includes the header of the last message parsed and a byte pointer (character position) in the file where the problem was encountered. The mail file is valid up to that pointer position.

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Parsing folder...Failed.
Display Delete Undelete Answer Forward Hardcopy Move To Update Get Mail
Mail browser for {ERIS}<GRIMBLE>MAIL>EXPERIMENT.MAIL;2
Cannot parse file {ERIS}<GRIMBLE>MAIL>EXPERIMENT.MAIL;2 near message 1
, byte 0 because: Bad header or previous message length is incorrect

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Figure 28. A browser window showing an error message printed by Lafite when it was unable to parse the mail folder

The most common way to get a mail file into an inconsistent state is to abort a Move To or Update command somewhere in the middle (either manually, or because a remote server crashed). In the case of Move To, the problem is usually that the last message in the file is “too short,” since it was never completely written. If the first operation you perform on the destination file after the crash is to

browse it, Lafite will (usually) detect this situation and let you browse the file anyway, with a warning that the last message is truncated. Updating the file then corrects the length of the last message. If you neglect to browse the destination file before moving additional messages to it, however, your mail file will not parse.

Another way you can damage a mail file is to get it into a TEdit file, edit it, and save it under the original name. The next time you browse that mail folder, Lafite will be unable to parse the file.

The solution to “mail file does not parse” problems is to scavenge the mail file with the Lisp Library package Mail Scavenger, following the instructions in chapter 14, “Using Lafite-Related Lisp Library Packages.”

Table of Contents Is Inconsistent With Mail File

Lafite breaks with a message to this effect when it tries to operate on a message that isn't where Lafite thought it was in the file. The most common cause of this is aborting the Expunge command. The appropriate action is to close the browser, select Don't Update, delete the table-of-contents file (the file with -LAFITE-TOC appended to the name) from your directory, and then browse the file again. If this is not successful, you may need to scavenge the file with Mail Scavenger. If you made many changes to the browser (deletions, for example) that you would rather not lose, you can try selecting Write Out Changes Only when you close the browser. This may succeed if the inconsistencies in the table of contents did not intersect with your changes.