WebDirect
Accessing your databases in a web browser

WebDirect is the fancy new name from Apple Inc. for *publishing* databases on the web.

In FileMaker Pro 12 and earlier, it was called Instant Web Publishing (IWP). With WebDirect, you get the same feature, just a little more refined (and uses the latest HTML5 for more accurate reproduction of layouts in a web browser). However, this feature used to be free. There was a time when you could access your databases online without purchasing a FileMaker Pro app. Unfortunately, Apple did not like this approach. The problem is that the company could not make enough money from selling enough FileMaker Pro apps to other users who could also access the databases in this way. Apple is a shareholder company and it must find ways to please its shareholders with substantial profits. Furthermore, the person who owns the databases can potentially bypass all the push technology when accessing his/her own personal or business-related data. Not good for Apple after spending more than a billion dollars building its own servers in the United States and with a goldmine of potentially useful information coming from users and business professionals being siphoned away by the FileMaker platform should users choose to go this way. So, after much consideration, the company has come up with a new monthly subscription and per concurrent user fee-based model to ensure the company earns money from users and/or the developers of the databases published online.

What is IWP / WebDirect?

IWP/WebDirect is the means by which users can access their databases in any web browser. You can see the data, make modifications if the databases allow it and, under the FileMaker platform, re-create the look and feel of the layout designs for any user on the internet. To geeky webmasters, the former feature is useful. However, it is the latter aspect that is considered the most useful as it would allow anyone to create powerful database-driven web sites without needing to learn HTML, PHP, Javascript or anything else other than to design the layout how you wish knowing the design will be closely matched in the web browser. Indeed, with the latest version of FileMaker Server, the accuracy of the design online is incredible.

In FileMaker Pro 12 and earlier, IWP permitted a standard copy of the FileMaker Pro app to serve on a web browser the layouts and data of any database with up to 5 users simulktaneously (originally 9 in much earlier versions until Apple came along and bought the licensing rights to the software from Claris Corporation). Even with 5 users, this was a useful feature for small groups within an organization or for a family. However, Apple has seen a problem with this approach. Therefore, to avoid too many consumers choosing low-cost or free FileMaker Pro databases from other developers (e.g., SUNRISE) as an alternative to Apple's own contacts.app

(which has a specific purpose for the company of gathering personal details), and to avoid people by-passing the push technology through Apple's own servers (which Apple has a use for all that data going through its servers), the company has decided to reduce consumer interest in this feature by introducing a bug into IWP in FileMaker Pro 11 making it difficult to enable this service. The aim was clear: at some point Apple would prefer to drop the feature altogether. However, interest in the feature remained strong. So Apple had to continue supporting it. Now a solution has been found to give people what they want, but ensure it makes a profit in doing so. It is called WebDirect, and you must pay for FileMaker Server 13 or higher for the privilege of accessing your own databases on the web using this technology. And that is not all. The payment model is designed in such a way that you must pay on a monthly basis and per concurrent user to Apple. This approach effectively makes it too expensive for consumers to enjoy the benefits of SUNRISE Contacts 2017 in a web browser. Only big companies with money to burn can afford this option.

How to enable WebDirect

If you are not perturbed by such restrictions and higher costs and would like to pursue web publishing (or WebDirect), here are the steps to achieving this:

A. How to host SUNRISE Contacts 2017 through FileMaker Server

1. If you have FileMaker Server 15 or higher, you have to prepare your databases for hosting on the server with the help of FileMaker Pro 15 (if you have a copy of this app) or SUNRISE Contacts 2017.app/exe. What does "prepare" mean? This is nothing more than specifying which databases should be visible in a web browser (we have done the hard work of creating the databases), entering a couple of other details (supplied by the people who give you access to the internet) such as IP address and port number, and then you are ready. With FileMaker Server 16, the only other thing to do is add the fonts you use to display text in the databases to the server's own font folder. By doing this, printing the layouts of the database on a web browser will ensure the text will appear exactly as they do in FileMaker Pro on a client's machine. Once prepared, the databases are hosted on a network through FileMaker Server (i.e., the moment when people can start accessing the databases online).

2. As part of the preparation process, you might be wondering, "Which databases should I make visible for hosting on a network?" You can always choose to show all the databases to your online users. But for greater security, it is usually better to hide databases that you know users will never need to access. Remember, hiding does not necessarily mean no access. It only means users cannot see other databases, but the ones that are visible can still access those databases. For example, contacts.fmp12 requires postcode.fmp12 to obtain postcode

information. This kind of information would probably be useful to view by online users if you choose contacts.fmp12 to be visible to your users. Therefore, contacts.fmp12 can be made visible online, but postcodes.fmp12 can be hidden from view on all web browsers while still allowing contacts.fmp12 to obtain postcode data. To simplify the process of knowing which databases are linked together for the Contacts, we recommend that you drag-and-drop the entire folder of core (or standard) SUNRISE Contacts 2017 databases into the FileMaker Server database hosting folder (ignore the self-running application supplied with SUNRISE Contacts 2017 known as *SUNRISE Contacts 2017.app/exe*, this can be removed and serves no purpose in FileMaker Server). When you have the databases in the Server's folder, make visible only contacts.fmp12. This should be more than enough to make it work.

3. Add any other lookup databases you may have purchased to the SUNRISE Contacts 2017 folder contained inside the Server's database hosting folder and make them visible if you wish other users (including yourself) to access them online.

4. Launch FileMaker Server (if you have not done so already).

5. Let FileMaker Server know the location of the SUNRISE Contacts 2017 databases for hosting. This is basically the folder you have set up in FileMaker Server to host databases online. If you have dropped SUNRISE Contacts databases into this folder, they will be hosted by FileMaker Server.

6. Once FileMaker Server knows you have the databases ready for hosting, click the button in FileMaker Server to start up web publishing. It will immediately start serving the databases online. You are ready to open a web browser on another computer to see the results.

B. Configuring for WebDirect using SUNRISE Contacts 2017.app or FileMaker Pro.app

1. Don't have FileMaker Server but still want to begin the process of "preparing" the databases for serving by FileMaker Server? No problems. You can do this directly through SUNRISE Contacts 2017.app or FileMaker Pro.app (version 15 or higher). Just open up contacts.fmp12 (or launch SUNRISE Contacts 2017.app). In the Lookup Databases layout (click Command or Ctrl 8), open up all the databases for serving on a network (including the ones that will be hidden). All open databases will be shown in a list for configuring in step 2.

2. In contacts.fmp12, make sure you are not in the Lookup Database layout (you won't see the menu command to prepare the databases). Choose another layout, such as the Contacts layout.

Under the File Menu, you will see extra commands. Choose Sharing → Configure for FileMaker WebDirect. From there you will see all available open databases. Put a tick against one or more databases you want to web publish (i.e., you want to see the layouts and data in a web browser via WebDirect). If one database needs to access data in another database but you don't want the other database to be visible, select the other database and put a tick in the check box that says "Don't display in WebDirect homepage".

3. Specify the users who can have access to each visible database. You can choose all users or users from a specific authentication account group.

4. Close the Sharing dialog box.

5. If you have not done so already, choose "Access…" in the File menu. In the Database Access layout, you need to make sure the users who will have access to the database are shown in the records. If not, those users will never be able to login and access the database through FileMaker Server. So to give users access, create records for each user or groups of users based on authentication account group. If this is the first time you have seen this layout, the default users who can access the database are FileMaker Guest and Admin (by default, the Owner user has immediate access to the database, so this user doesn't need to be shown). Removing these records will stop FileMaker Guest and Admin users from gaining access to the database on the network (i.e., on the internet). So decide carefully whether to keep or remove these records. If you are using FileMaker Server and want guest users to use their own external authentication (e.g., the one they use to log onto their computers), create new records for all these users in the layout. Thus, in the Account Name field, enter the username of each user (the one he/she will enter to log onto his/her computer) like so *Guest//Username*. Additional fields shown in the Access layout called Full Name, Position, Work Phone, Room and Email are there to help the administrator/owner to contact users quickly and identify who is accessing the database. Finally, the Status field tells the administrator/owner of any problems for specific users, such as login failures. If you want the same users to access other databases, the records of this Access layout should be exported (i.e., you should see a file called *access.exp*). Rename this file to *access.imp*, and import the records into the same Database Access layout of other databases to help speed up data entry work.

6. Close the databases. The information you have specified in the Sharing dialog box and Database Access layout will be saved with the databases.

7. Now you are ready to publish your databases to the web. You can either drag-and-drop the entire folder of databases (once you

have properly quit the application for preparing your databases) into the FileMaker Server database hosting folder (without SUNRISE Contacts 2017.app/exe), or you can individually upload each database file to FileMaker Server using Sharing→Upload to FileMaker Server…

C.   Web browser access to SUNRISE Contacts 2017

1.   If your database(s) are being hosted by FileMaker Server, it is time to open your web browser.

2.   Type in the address: http://127.0.0.1/ (or whatever web address is specified by your administrator). If you have changed the port number (the administrator will tell you this), try http://:n/, where n is the port number. You should see a link to your database(s).

3.   Click a link to a database to open it.

4.   Type your username and password for the database (if required). Click Login. It usually takes about 20 seconds on a 1.6GHz single processor machine (much faster on machines with higher speed and with in-built dual or quad core processors) to display the database layout. Once the layout shows up in the web browser, it should be quick to navigate through the records.

RECOMMENDATION
Turn off Firewall, or set up the Firewall such that a port can be opened exclusively for FileMaker Server to publish the layouts and data over a network.