

# Getting the most out of the Archive File Attribute

## Using the Archive attribute as a wildcard attribute

### About the A bit

The Archive Attribute bit, commonly referred to as the A bit, is set by the operating system any time a file is created or changed. In the beginning the A bit was commonly used to determine which files would be copied during an incremental backup process. That is, a process which only backs up files that are brand new or have changed since the last time you did a backup. It is a valid process still in use today however there are also other methods available to determine which files should be copied. One common method is to compare the source and destination file timestamps and/or file sizes. If either the file timestamp or file size is different the source file is copied (backed up) to the destination. The Opus **Copy UpdateAll** command and the **Synchronize Panel** use a slight variation of this method.

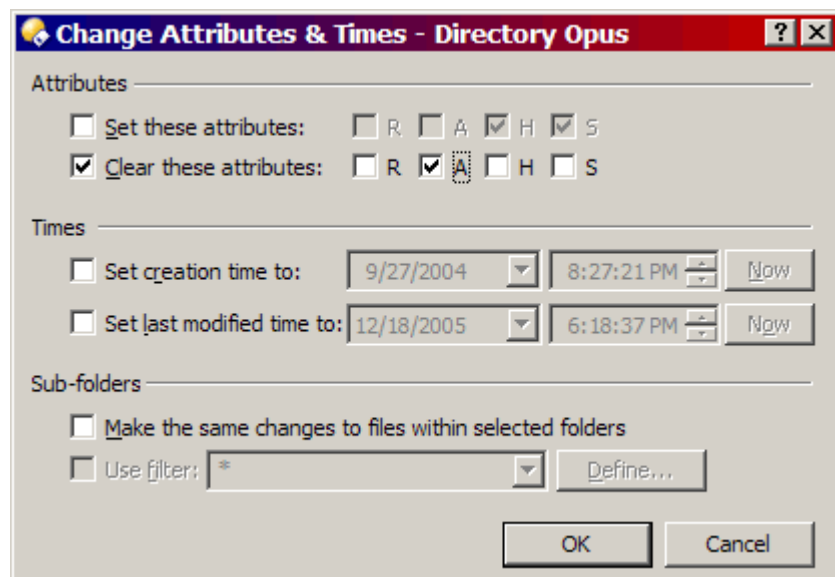
So the A attribute may be largely unused and ignored on many disk drives. If you are not using the A bit as part of your backup strategy you might want to consider using it as a wildcard attribute when needed. To select specific files for copying, deleting, or whatever you may want to do with them.

*Note that throughout this I will be referring to test directories and subdirectories filled with test files. I strongly urge anyone experimenting with file management changes of any kind, to do so on unimportant files in unimportant directories. That way if anything goes awry no permanent damage is done. Once your technique is refined and ready for actual use, only then should you apply it to important files.*

In this tutorial we will discuss how to copy only the files with the A bit set while retaining their relative paths.

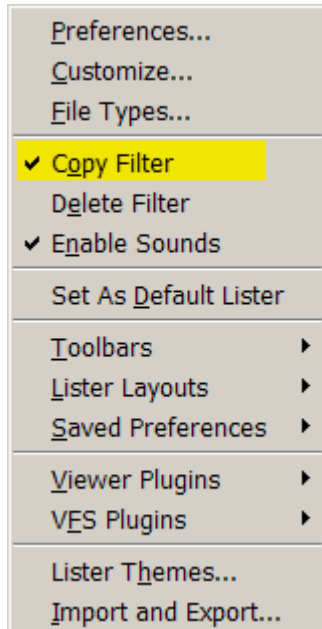
First go to a test directory of files you want to process, put it in flat view mode with a button command something like **Set FLATVIEW=MixedNoFolders,Toggle**.

Next select all of the files in that flat viewed directory and turn **off** their A bits by using the **SetAttr** command as shown in the dialog box below.

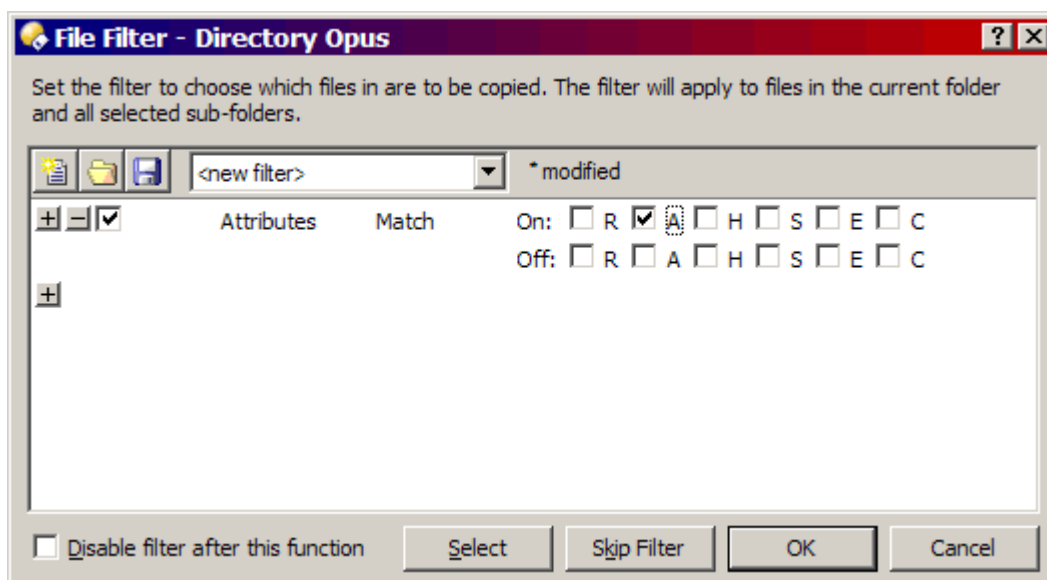


Now turn **on** the A attribute of *some* of those files using the same **SetAttr** command above. For a test it does not matter which of the files have their A bit turned on, nor what subdirectory they may be in. However in real use you might be selecting all of the files in a lister produced by running the **Find** command, files you have filtered by another method, or perhaps just files that meet no specific criteria other than the fact that you want to do something with them. The idea is to turn **on** the A attribute of *only* the files you want to do something with.

Next with the A bit set (turned on) in some of your test files, **exit Flat View**, go to **Settings**, and turn **on** the **Copy Filter**.



Now select all of the files/folders in your source test directory and attempt to copy them to the destination via drag and drop, copy and paste, or whatever method you prefer. Before anything actually happens a dialog box should immediately pop up prompting you for a filter. Configure that filter to be like the one below.



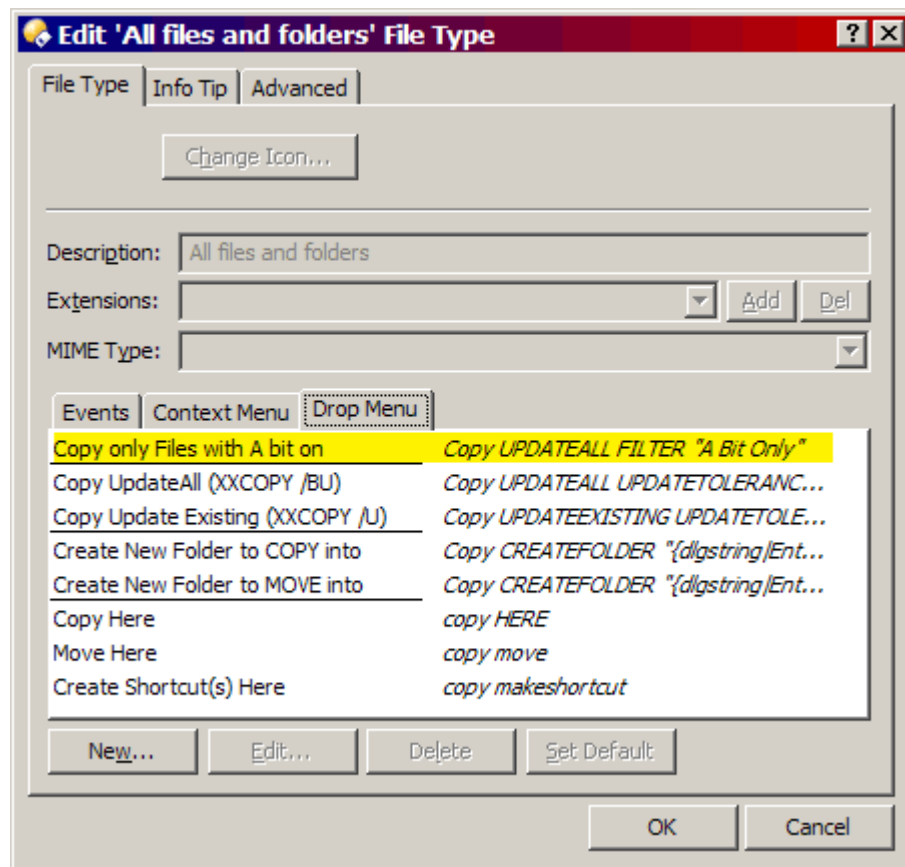
After you have done so click OK and only the source files with the A bit set should be copied to the destination (while retaining their relative path structure). Make sure you turn the Copy Filter back off after you are done to avoid being prompted each time you want to copy files/folders.

The same general procedure can be used for deleting files with the A bit set, just use the **Delete Filter** instead of the Copy Filter under settings.

That's the general idea. You can use this concept in many ways, via drag and drop, a **Copy UpdateAll** context menu entry, the **Synchronize Panel**, and more.

You can also avoid the filter prompt by saving the filter and building it into your button command, context menu command, or drag and drop menu command. For example the following right click Drag and Drop menu configured at:

### Settings/File Types/All files and folders/Edit/Drop Menu



could be used via a right click drag and drop operation to always copy/update only the source files which have the A bit set (without being prompted for a filter).

And finally, even if you are using the A bit as part of your current back up strategy, you can still use this general procedure to select files with their A bits (or any of the other attribute bits) set, or even unset, to do other things.

*Finis*