Note: This discussion is based on macOS, 10.14.6 (Mojave). Some illustrations may differ when using other versions of macOS or OS X. Most illustrations are from screenshots on my iMac.
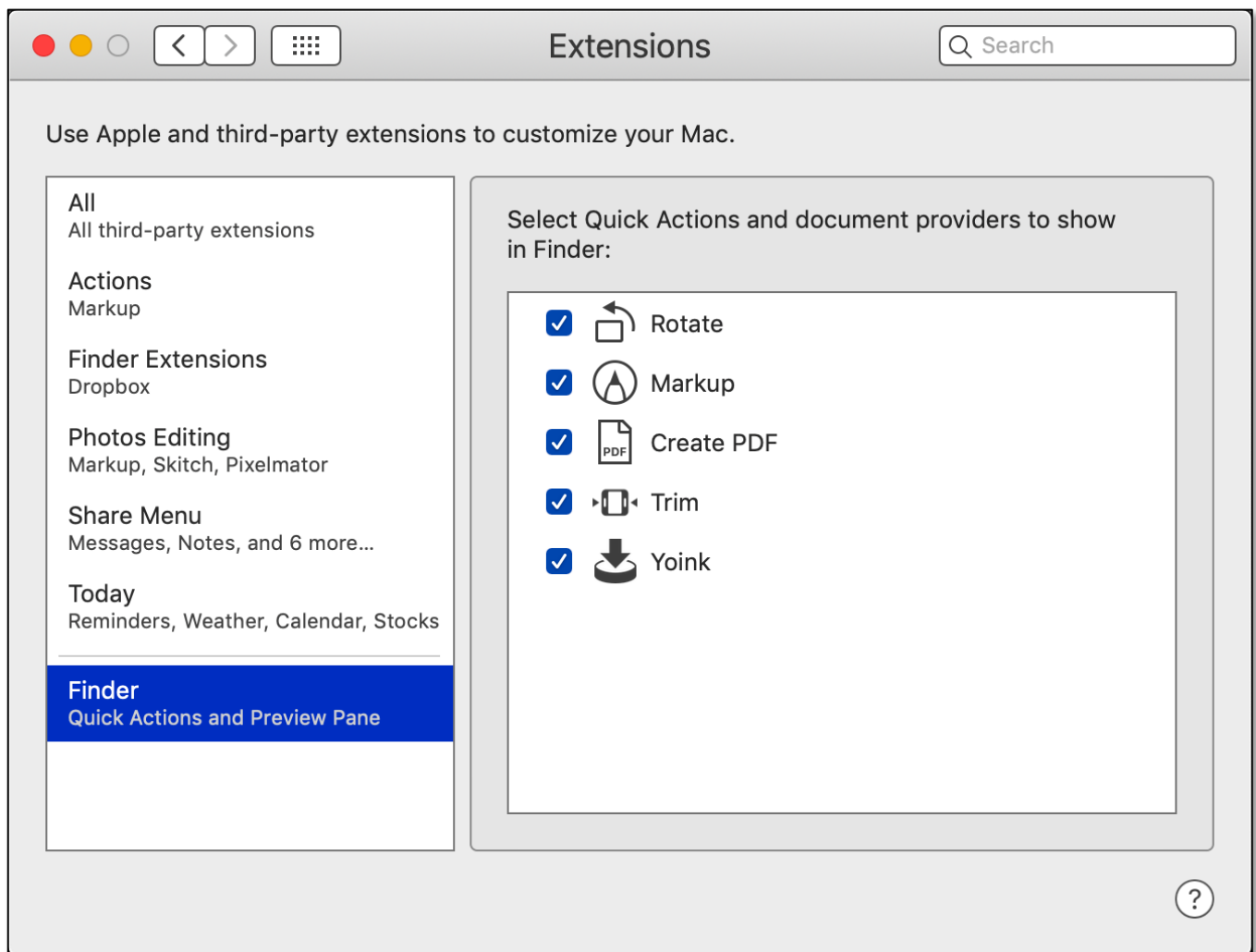
I've always used the Preview app to combine PDFs into one file. Recently, I stumbled on a Finder **Quick Action** that does the same thing, and this prompted me to look further into Finder Quick Actions and how they work.

This presentation will provide a brief introduction to **Quick Actions**. Next month, we'll go into greater detail.

Finder Quick Actions – What Are They?

Quick Actions was a new feature introduced in macOS Mojave (10.14). Its purpose is to let the user work on files directly in the Finder without having to open an app. Quick Actions allow us to rotate images, markup a file, create PDFs, and more. Some are pre-installed by the macOS; some by other apps.

Quick Actions are part of a family of add-ons listed in the **Extensions pane** in **System Preferences**. They are specific Finder extensions used for editing a file. The image below shows those that I have installed on my iMac:
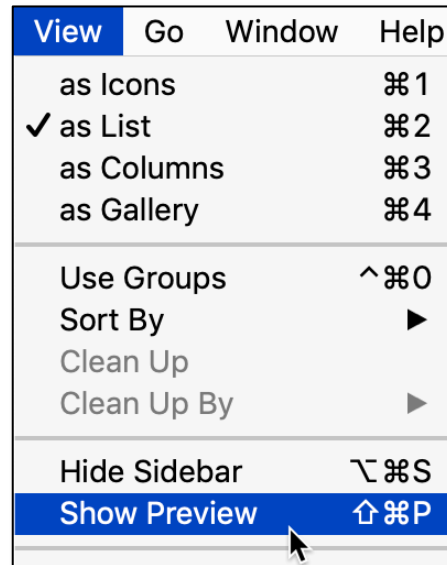

Finder Quick Actions (System Preferences, Extensions)
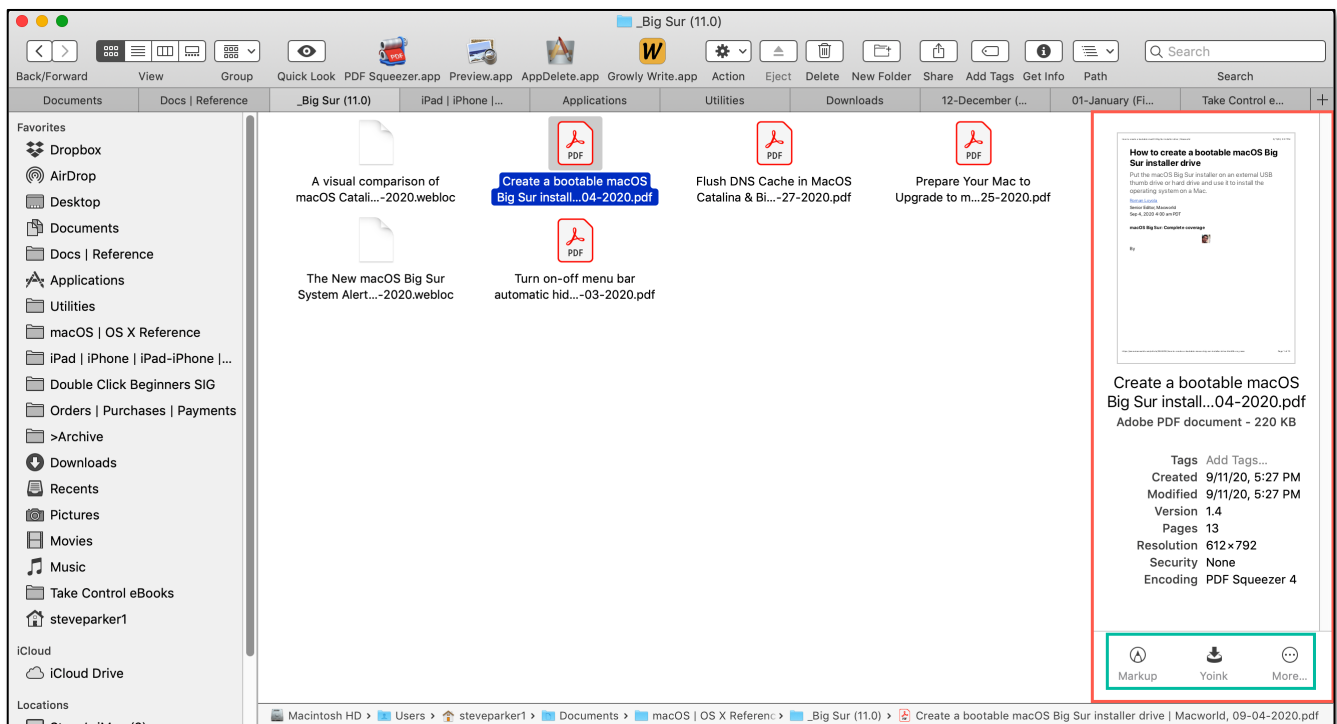
Accessing Quick Actions

Start by opening a Finder window containing a file that you want to edit. Then there are two ways to access Quick Actions (**Show Preview** and a **Contextual Menu**):

View > Show Preview. In the Finder's **View menu**, select **Show Preview** (keyboard shortcut: **Shift-Command-P**). **Show Preview** toggles to **Hide Preview** and vice versa.

"Show Preview" Menu Item

This will display a sidebar with a small preview of a file along with its metadata (size, creation, modification, last opened dates, etc.).
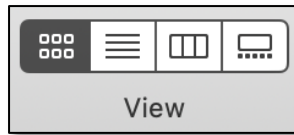

Preview Sidebar (Finder Icon View)

Finder Quick Actions (Part 1), 01-17-2021

Quick Actions are added below the preview of the selected file in the sidebar (as shown in image on the previous page). Available actions will vary depending on the type of file (image, video, audio, etc.). In this example, Markup and Yoink (a drag and drop app that provides a temporary place for files to be dragged to) are available for the selected file.
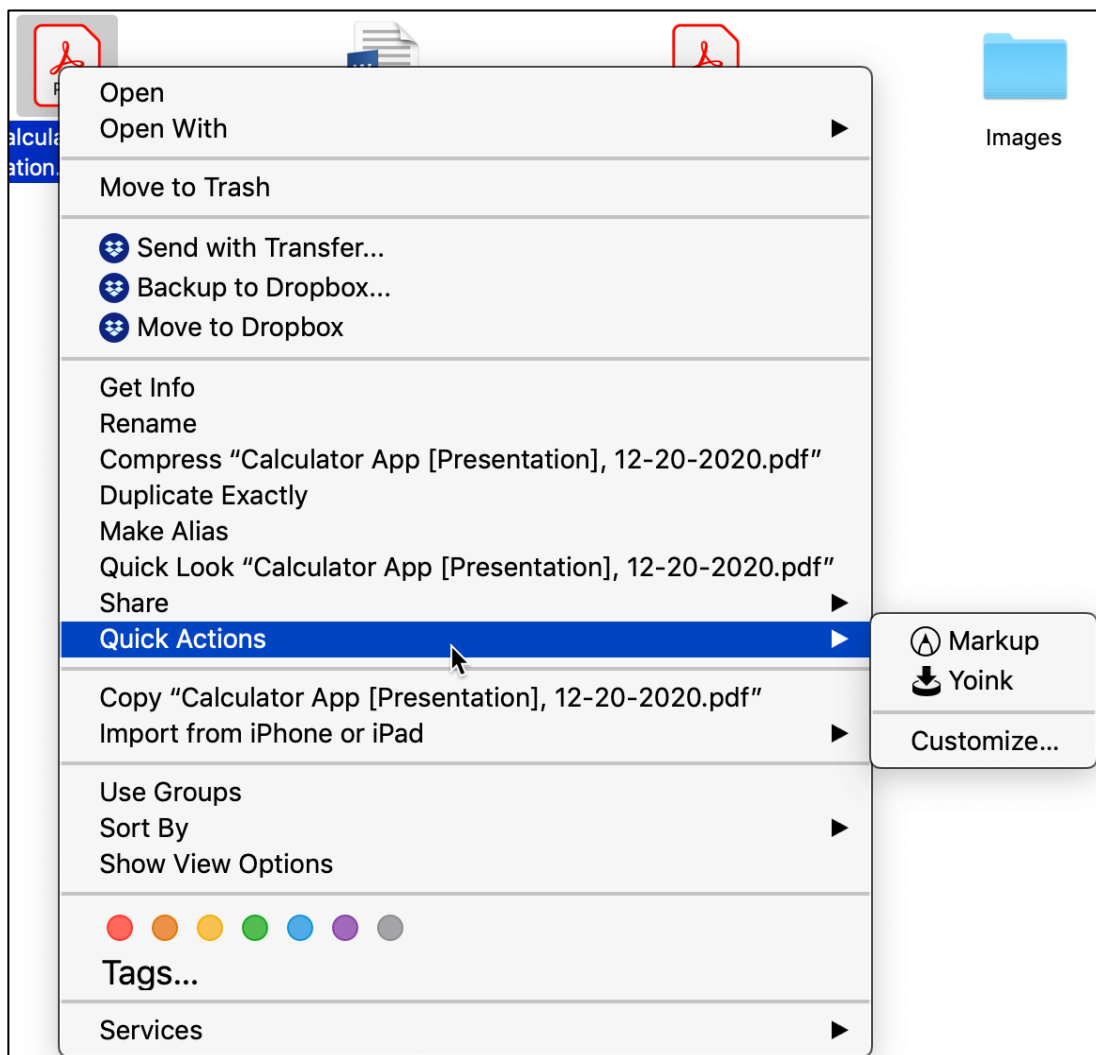
Finder View Settings

Finder View Settings

If you're using the Finder's **Icon**, **List** or **Gallery View** settings, a Preview sidebar is displayed (as shown in the image on the previous page). In **Column View**, the Preview is displayed in the rightmost column (effectively, a sidebar).

Contextual Menu > Quick Actions. Right Click on a Finder file to bring up the Contextual Menu (pop-up). Then choose the **Quick Actions** menu item for a list of available actions:
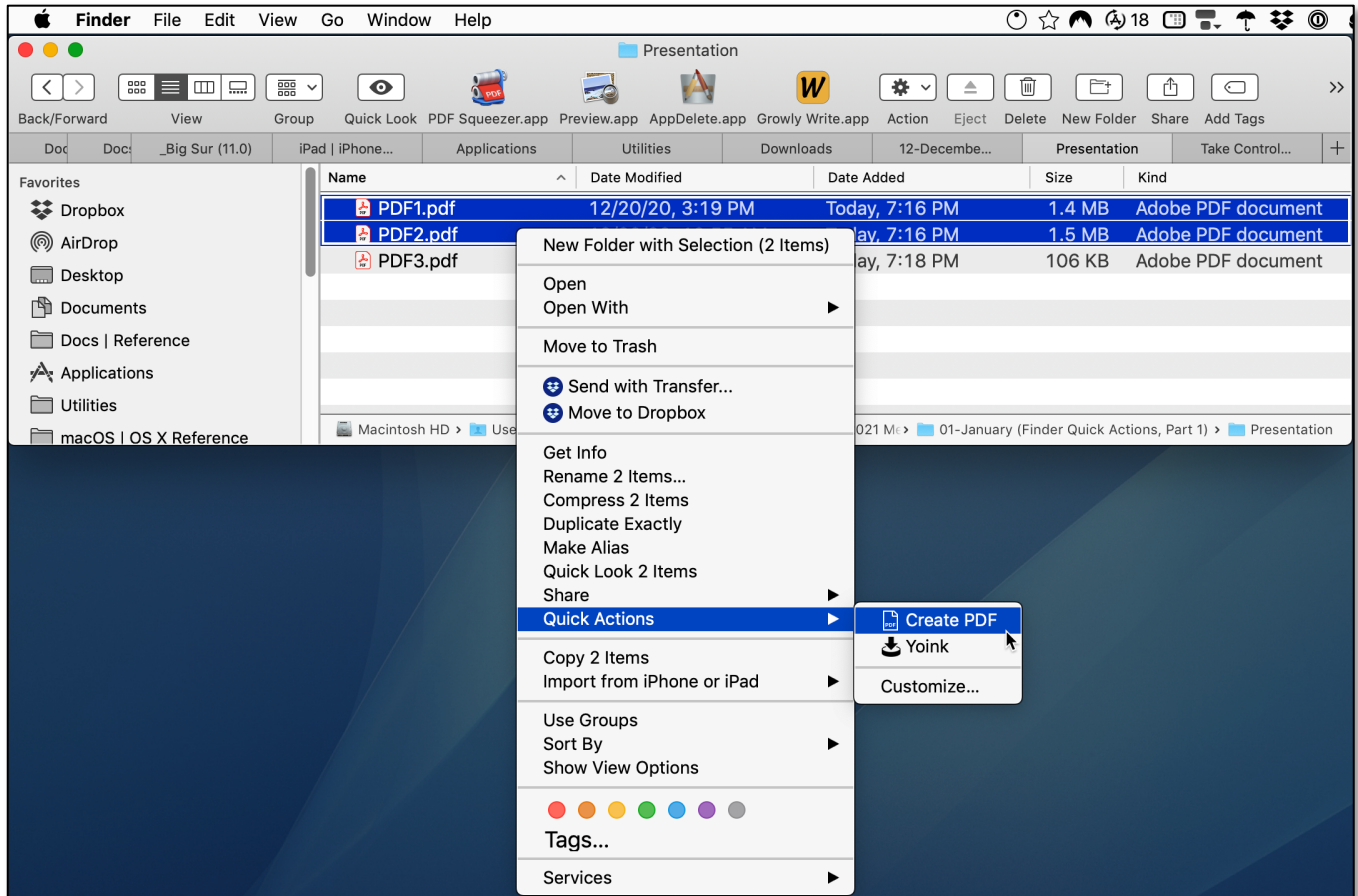

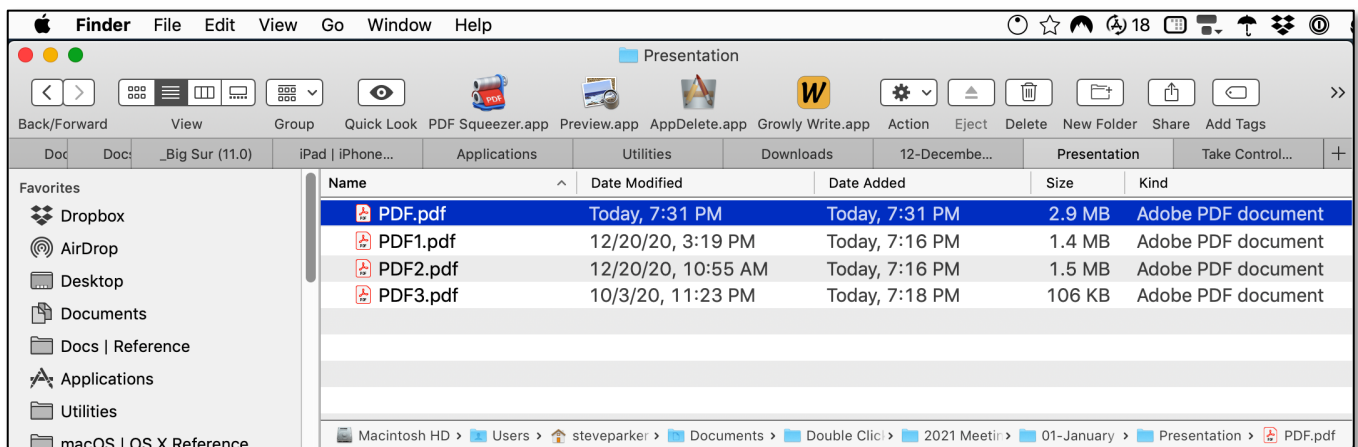**Contextual Menu (Pop-Up) – Quick Actions Menu Item**

Using a Quick Action

At the beginning of this presentation, I mentioned using a Quick Action to combine PDFs into one file. It's simple to do. Just select the PDF files (two in this example, PDF1 and PDF2, but could be more), and use the Contextual Menu to select Quick Actions. Then choose the **Create PDF** Quick Action:

Combine Two PDFs Using the Contextual Menu & Selecting the "Create PDF" Quick Action

Here's the result:

Result of Combining Two PDFs Using the Create PDF Quick Action

As you can see, the new, combined PDF is 2.9 MB in size which is the same as the size of the two PDFs used to create it (1.4 MB and 1.5 MB).

Further Editing. If you wish to further edit the new PDF, other Quick Actions, such as Markup, may be available. You could also use the Preview app for editing (perhaps to rearrange pages or delete some of them).

Summary

Quick Actions allow you to work on files directly in the Finder without the need to use another app. Quick Actions allow us to rotate images, create PDFs, and more. Simply open a Finder window containing the file or files to be edited.

Then use one of two options to access available Quick Actions:

- Choose **Show Preview** from the Finder's View menu to open the Preview sidebar. Available **Quick Actions** will be shown at the bottom of the sidebar.
- **Right Click** on the file to bring up the **Contextual Menu** pop-up, and select the **Quick Actions** menu item. A list of available ones will then be displayed.

Next Presentation

For the next presentation, we'll explore more about Quick Actions.

Have a favorite Mac Tip or utility? Please feel free to pass it along, and I'll see if I can work it into a future presentation.

If you have any suggestions for presentation topics, including macOS utilities, please contact me at slp4668@gmail.com.

–Steve Parker

Credits & Reference:

- Guide to Quick Actions in macOS Mojave (https://eshop.macsales.com/blog/45303-a-guide-to-quick-actions-in-macos-mojave/)
- Quick Actions: 1 Introduction (https://eclecticlight.co/2019/02/04/quick-actions-1-introduction/)