Drop Shipping

Contents

Overview

One very common file transfer task is sending large files to specific outside people, usually via e-mail, but without the restrictions and problems created by sending large files as e-mail attachments. In Rumpus, we call this drop shipping, and it's such a popular option that it has spawned a desktop applet (Rumplet) and a variety of options for simplifying and customizing sending files to meet your exact needs.

In it's simplest form, here's how it works:

A local user chooses to send a file either by logging in to the Rumpus Web File Manager, or using Rumplet on his or her desktop. In the Web interface, the user clicks "Drop Ship A File" to open the drop ship dialog and select the file(s) to send.
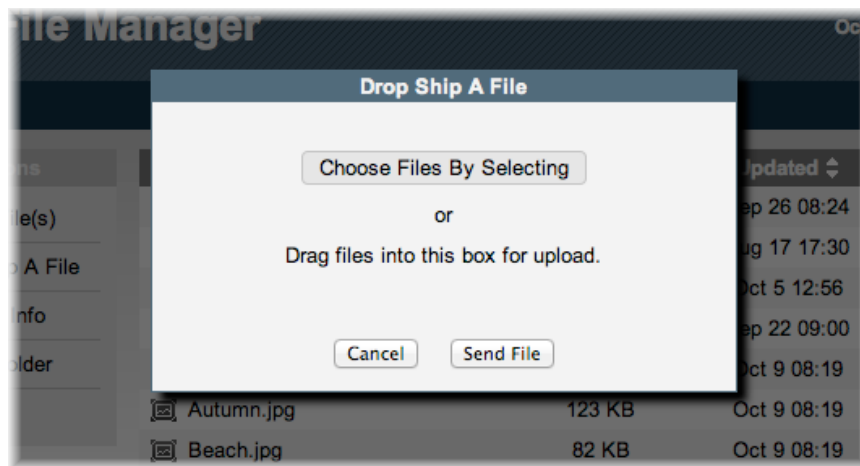

The Drop Ship file selection box, with all user Drop Ship options disabled.

Once the sender selects the file and clicks "Send File", Rumpus generates a "file pickup URL", as shown here.
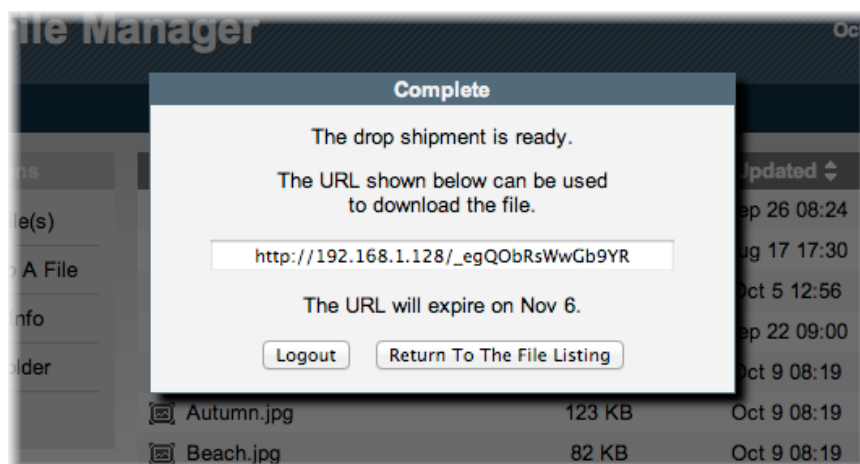
The Drop Shipment is ready, and Rumpus displays a pickup URL.

The file sender then copies the file pickup URL and sends it to the recipient via e-mail or any other method he or she chooses. Rumpus can also automatically send the e-mail to the recipient. For example, here's how a standard drop ship message might look to a file recipient.
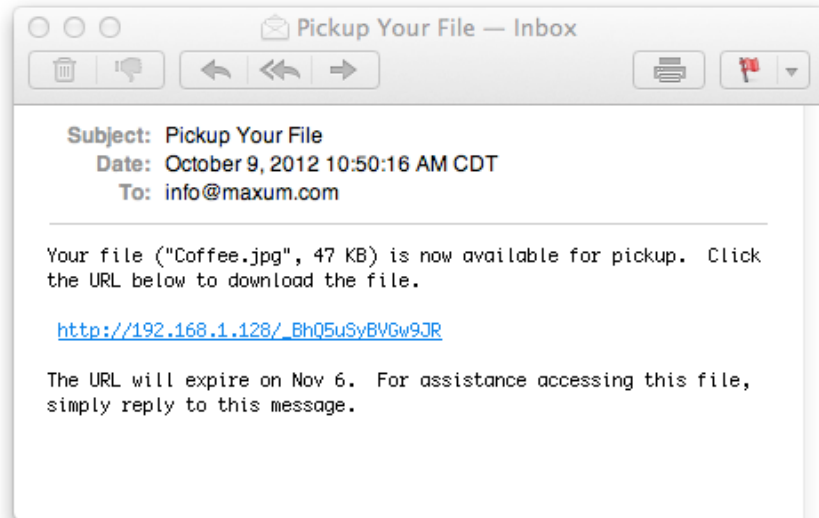
An e-mail, sent by Rumpus to a drop ship file recipient.

All the file recipient needs to do is click the URL. When they do, the default Web browser will open automatically and download the file.

Quick Tips

We'll cover complete setup in the next section, but first we present a few tips to help you avoid common problems and use drop shipping effectively. These are essentially the short answers to the most common drop shipping questions:

Use "Download Page"

Leave the file Transfer Style at "Download Page", unless you have read and fully understand the section on "Transfer Styles". The Download Page option is the most reliable transfer method and provides the best interface for a variety of file types.

Send Files Already On The Server

To allow users to drop ship files that already exist on the Rumpus server, enable the "Include Drop Ship Link" option on the "Actions" tab of the Web Settings window.

Addressing File "Picked Up" Event Notices

When creating an Event Notice to be used as a file "picked up" notice, enter your own e-mail address as the "Mail To" address to simplify testing. File "Picked Up Notices" will be automatically sent to the e-mail address of the user who sent the file (as long as it has been provided for that user account on the Define Users window).

Try Rumplet

Rumplet is a desktop application available for both Mac and Windows PC, which allows users to send drop shipments without logging into the WFM, directly from their desktop. For details, see the "Rumplet" folder in the Rumpus package.

Manage Outstanding Shipments

If you need to view current shipments, or even delete one, use the "Activity Detail" window in Rumpus or the "Activity Monitor" in the Web server administration interface. Allow users to manage their own current shipments using the shipment history window in Rumplet.

Basic Setup

Setup starts on the Network Settings window, with basic network and e-mail server information complete. In particular, be sure that you have supplied the "External Network IP address" and the "External Server Name" fields, and that the E-Mail "Send A Test Message" button results in an e-mail message correctly sent to your mailbox.

Primary drop ship setup is performed on the Web Settings window, on the "Appearance: Guests" tab.
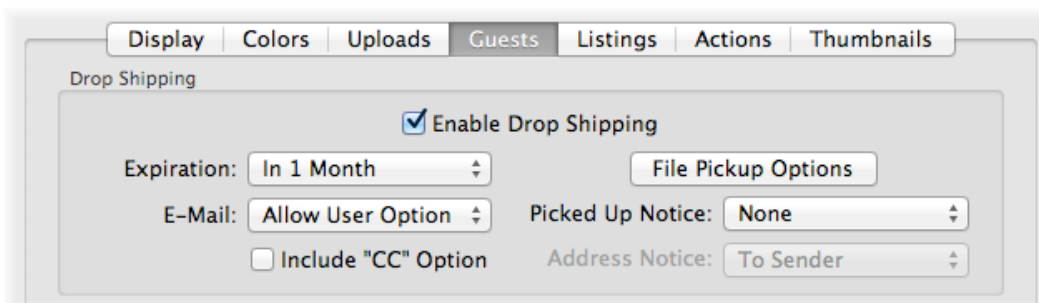
Drop shipping setup options are available on the Web Settings window.

To start, check the "Enable Drop Shipping" checkbox.

If you would like to allow users to drop ship files that already exist on the server, be sure to flip to the "Actions" tab and check the "Include Drop Ship Link" checkbox. With that option enabled, an action icon (or menu option, depending on your setup) will be included in WFM file listings, allowing users to drop ship files already on the server without re-uploading them from their desktop.

Drop shipping can be enabled or disabled for individual user accounts, so you'll also need to enable the "Drop Ship Files" privilege on the Define Users window for each user who should be allowed to drop ship files.

Several options, including "Expiration" and "E-Mail", can be set to a pre-set value or be offered as a user selection for each drop ship file sent. For example, the "Expiration" option can be set to a specific time period (1 Day, 5 Days, 1 Week, etc.) or to "User Selectable", giving senders the ability to select the expiration time period for each file sent. It is recommended that you choose a specific preset value for these options whenever possible, simplifying drop shipping for end users. By selecting an expiration period for all drop shipments, for example, you simplify the drop ship interface by reducing the number of options, and you'll always have a consistent answer to the question of how long drop ship URLs remain active.

Drop Ship Options

Expiration

The "Expiration" period determines how long a drop ship URL remains valid after the drop shipment is first created. When a drop shipment expires, the file is automatically removed from the holding area and the shipment will no longer appear in the active shipments list on the Activity Detail list or Rumplet History panel. The option "After Pickup" indicates that the shipment can be downloaded only once, causing the shipment to expire immediately after the first download completes.

E-Mail

When Web users drop ship files, Rumpus can do the whole job, sending the recipient the link via e-mail, or just generate the URL for copy/pasting by the sender.

Include "CC" Option

Drop ship e-mail messages sent by Rumpus can be "CC'd" to another e-mail address, if the sender wishes. By enabling this option, senders can address the drop ship message to a primary recipient and an alternate e-mail address for delivery.

Picked Up Notice

The "Picked Up Notice" refers to an Event Notice that is automatically triggered whenever a drop ship file is downloaded (or "picked up") by a recipient. In other words, if file senders should be notified when the files they have sent have been accessed, then define an Event Notice and select it as the "Picked Up Notice".

Event Notices used for drop ship sender notifications are usually e-mail notices. In this case, Rumpus will override the "Mail To" field of the Event Notice, and automatically address the message to either the sender or another e-mail address the sender specifies when they send the file. To have picked up notices sent to the sender by default, but allow the sender to change the address if needed, select "Default To Sender" from the "Address Notice" pop-up menu.

File Pickup Options

File pickup options allow you to define exactly what happens when a recipient clicks the drop ship URL.

Transfer Style

The "Transfer Style" determines how the file will be downloaded or presented to the recipient when they click the download link. The "Download Page" option is often the best choice, and causes a "your download will begin momentarily" message to be displayed and the file to be downloaded to the recipient's local system. The "Simple Download" option causes the browser to load the file directly, in which case certain media types will be displayed in the browser window, while other files will be downloaded to the recipient's system. Some browsers, notably Internet Explorer, may have security rules that block access to directly downloadable files and will therefore have problems accessing files when the "Simple Download" option is used. Finally, the "Content Wrapper" option causes the content wrapper page to be displayed, with the uploaded file (presumably an image, movie, or some other media file) displayed within the wrapper. The "Content Wrapper" option is a good choice when sending images or movies for review only, in which case the file should not actually be permanently stored on the recipient's computer.

Password Protection

A drop ship URL is made up of a fairly long and random string of characters, which in effect serves to authenticate users attempting to pick up a file. In other words, it's extremely unlikely that someone might stumble upon a pickup URL either accidentally or as part of a coordinated effort to hack the server. When a file recipient has a pickup URL, the URL itself acts as a password.

However, drop shipments can be further protected by assigning a pickup password. In this case, drop ship senders are offered the option of assigning a password to the shipment. When the recipient accesses the pickup URL, a password prompt will be shown and the correct password must be entered before the download will proceed.

It is important to note that requiring a pickup password and then sending the password in the e-mail message along with the pickup URL does not improve security at all, since any unauthorized person who obtains the pickup URL is also very likely to obtain the password along with it. Pickup passwords, when used, should be sent to the recipient via some entirely different method, like phone, text or fax. By delivering the pickup URL through one channel and the password through another, security is meaningfully improved.

Upload Center Forms

When recipients click a drop ship URL, Rumpus can also display a form, prompting for information before beginning the download. For example, you could configure Rumpus so that a user's name and e-mail address must be entered before each drop ship download begins. To do this, create an Upload Center form that defines the needed input fields, then select it from the "Upload Center Form" pop-up menu.

Information entered into the form by file recipients can be included in the Picked Up Notice in the same way normal Upload Center form data is included in Event Notices.

Pickup Prompt Title, Labels and Pickup Prompt Message

Both password protection and Upload Center forms require that file recipients are prompted for information before the download begins. The dialog box displayed to prompt for this information can be customized as needed.

If you enable password protection or select an Upload Center form for display, start with the default text in the "Pickup Prompt Title", "Password Field Label", "Submit Button Label" and "Pickup Prompt Message" fields, then try a test drop shipment. Access the drop ship URL and review the pre-download dialog, then make changes to each of these text options to suit your needs.
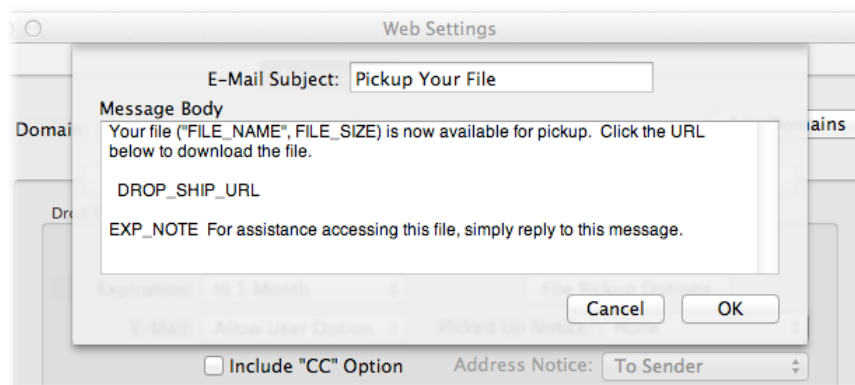
E-Mail Messages

The message subject and the e-mail message body can also be altered by the sender to customize the message or include additional information about the file being sent. The message body may include tokens which insert drop shipment information into the e-mail message automatically. These tokens, which must be in all caps, include:

DROP_SHIP_URL   Insert the full URL to access the shipped file.

FILE_NAME   Insert the original filename of the shipped file.

FILE_SIZE   Insert the drop ship file size.

DROP_SHIP_ID   Insert the drop shipment ID, which is part of the full URL.

EXP_NOTE   Insert a short sentence describing when the URL will expire.

Users must ensure that the "DROP_SHIP_URL" token is included in the message body without alteration. If that token is altered or removed, no file access URL will be included in the e-mail message. All other tokens are optional and may be removed if necessary.

As the system administrator, you can customize the default message by clicking the "Edit Default Drop Ship Message Text" button on the "Guests" tab of the Web Settings window.

Editing the default drop ship mail message text.

Tracking Shipments

Drop shipped files are more than simple files stored on the server; Rumpus maintains a database that maps drop ship URLs to the download file and tracks a variety of other information about the shipment as well. As the system administrator, you can view active drop shipments on the "Activity Detail" window of the Rumpus control application or the "Activity Monitor" server administration Web page.

In either the Web interface or the Rumpus control application, a full list of all active drop shipments is displayed. If a shipment needs to be cancelled for any reason, simply select it and click the delete button, and the drop ship file will be deleted and the drop shipment database will be updated accordingly.

Drop ship files are actually stored in a folder called "DropFiles" within the "Transient Data Storage Folder", which is defined on the "Advanced" tab of the Web Settings file. By default, the DropFiles folder is stored on the boot volume in the Rumpus configuration folder, which can be most easily opened from the "File" menu in Rumpus by choosing "Open Config Folder". Do not delete files manually from the DropFiles folder, since doing so will not cause the corresponding drop ship record to be removed from the Rumpus drop shipments database. Instead, use the server activity window to select and remove unneeded shipments.

Drop ship senders can also view and manage their own shipments from within Rumplet, using the drop ship history display. For details, see the "Rumplet" article in the Rumpus package.

The Drop Shipments Log

A permanent record of drop ship activity is maintained in the "DropShipments.log" file, as shown below.
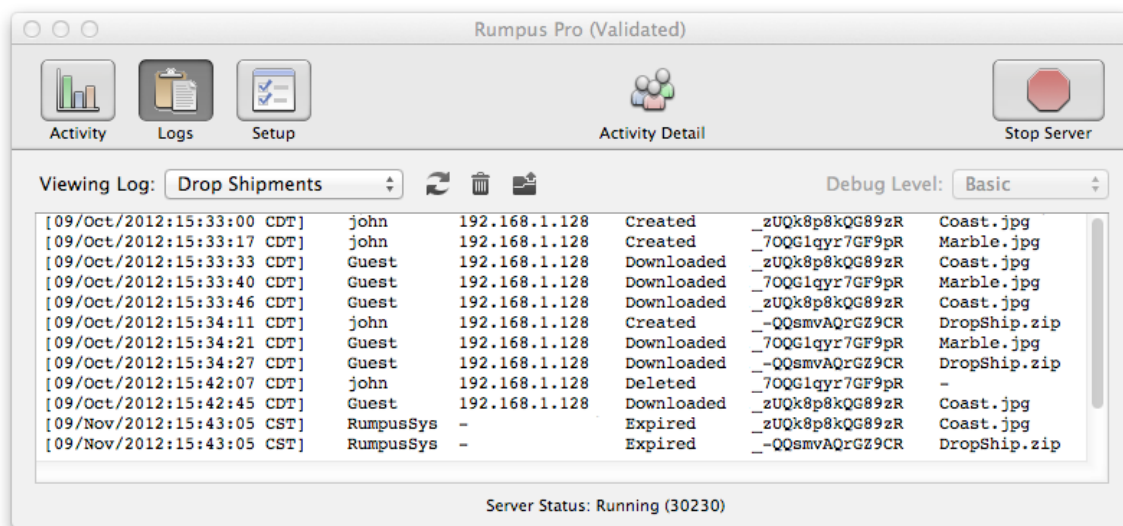
The Drop Shipments log, displayed in Rumpus. (Image optimized for size and clarity.)

As always, the "Logs" display in Rumpus shows only the last few hundred entries in the log file. To view the entire log, open the logs folder (which is defined on the "Logs" tab of the FTP Settings window) using the "Open Folder" button, and then open the log file in any text editor, database or log analyzer you wish.

Each line represents an action, beginning with the date and time the action was performed. Recorded in the next field on each line is the account name of the person who performed the action, or "RumpusSys" to indicate that the action was an automatic expiration performed by the system. Next, the IP address of client performing the action is included. (In the example above, all activity originates at the same test address.) The action, drop ship ID and filename of the file involved complete each entry in the log.