Universal Naming Convention (UNC)

To quickly navigate a file system on another computer, such as a network share, we can use UNC paths. The basics of UNC paths are described below.

Syntax: \\server\folder\file.doc

The first yellow section instructs File Explorer or Run, that the resource is on the network and is set with two backslashes. The second green section is the name of the computer/server. The third yellow section is another single backslash separating the computer name from a directory or resource located on the computer. The fourth magenta section is a folder/directory name. Then for the fifth section we have another single backslash delineating the folder from the final and sixth cyan section, in our example, which is a Microsoft Word document file.

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To evoke a UNC path, we will need to open File Explorer or Run. In the illustration below we are using File Explorer.

Note: This would be the syntax for creating a shortcut to a file located on a network share, also. To create a shortcut on our desktop for a file that is located on our network drive/share we would *right-click* on an empty area on our desktop and point our mouse over "New>" without clicking. This will trigger a fly-out menu where we *left-click* "Shortcut". This will bring up a dialog box where the computer wants a location or path. We can click browse and locate the file, directory, or application or we can paste a UNC path or website URL after we copy it from the address bar. To copy from the address bar, we would first *left-click* in the address bar, also ensuring all the text is selected and then press the keyboard combination Ctrl+C. After we have copied the path or URL to the clipboard we can bring up our "Shortcut" dialog and either *right-click* and select paste or simply use the keyboard combination Ctrl+V.

To type in a UNC path, we must first click in the "address bar" within File Explorer (1). This will highlight the current entry and we are ready to type our UNC path. In the example above, we typed \\zeus and then hit "enter" on our keyboard. This filled the main window with all the shares located on the computer Zeus. As we can see there are several items (To be exact, 69 items, as we can see in the lower left corner of the window). The next two pertinent objects in this scenario are two shares: CFS (2) and CFS-Shared (3). These are likely known as a G: and K: drive respectively.

Note: The address bar is also an element within any web browser, too, and is where you can copy a URL to make a shortcut.

Here at DDRC, we have a file server by the name of Zeus. If we are to connect to Zeus using UNC paths, such as \\zeus, we will see all the shares that are available. In general, all the folders Back to the Table of Contents

listed in the window are created per department. Therefore, we will want to find our department's folder. We can further refine this path, such as \\zeus\cfs\cfsstaff\<username>, after replacing <username> with our username (e.g., cwright in my case) to go directly to our personal network share. As we can see in the examples below we will find shared folders within other folders.

Examples:

\\zeus\cfs\cfsstaff\<username>

\\zeus\rc\rcstaff\<username>

\\zeus\QLO\QLO Staff\<username>