Creating a Portable ArcMap project

ArcMap projects frequently use layers that are stored in a variety of locations throughout the network. The MXD file created with ArcMap only contains the links to the data, not the data itself. If you know when you begin your project that you will need to share it with someone outside the organization, it makes sense to develop the entire project referencing data that is stored is either shape files or geodatabases in the same directory as the MXD file.

If you find out after your project is complete that you need to share an ArcMap project with someone who not have access to all the same network drives you do, you must create a more portable project. Do NOT send just the MXD file.
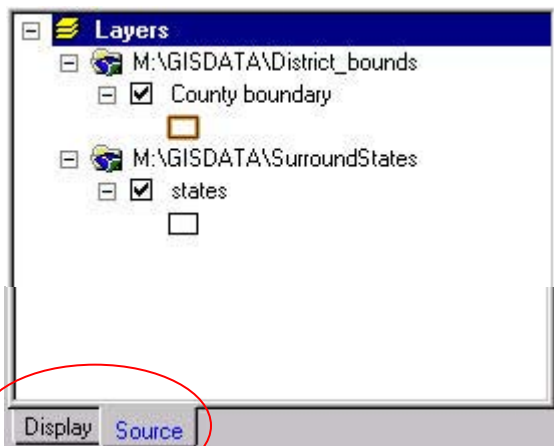
To make a project portable:
1. Create a subfolder in your project folder (i.e. DELIVERY).
2. Save a copy of your project into this new subfolder.
3. Copy all the data layers into the DELIVERY subfolder.
4. Open the copy of the MXD file.
5. Change the layer properties for each layer, modifying the Data Source, and point to the layers in the DELIVERY folder.
6. Edit the Map Properties to use relative path names instead of full path names.
7. Zip the entire DELIVERY folder into a single zip file.
8. Send the zip file to its destination.
9. End user should unzip the zip file into a new empty folder.

Create a subfolder
Create a subfolder in your project folder to hold all the files required for the portable version of your project. Suggested file name, DELIVERY.

Save a copy of your project
Open your project, use File > Save As and create save a copy of your project in this subfolder.
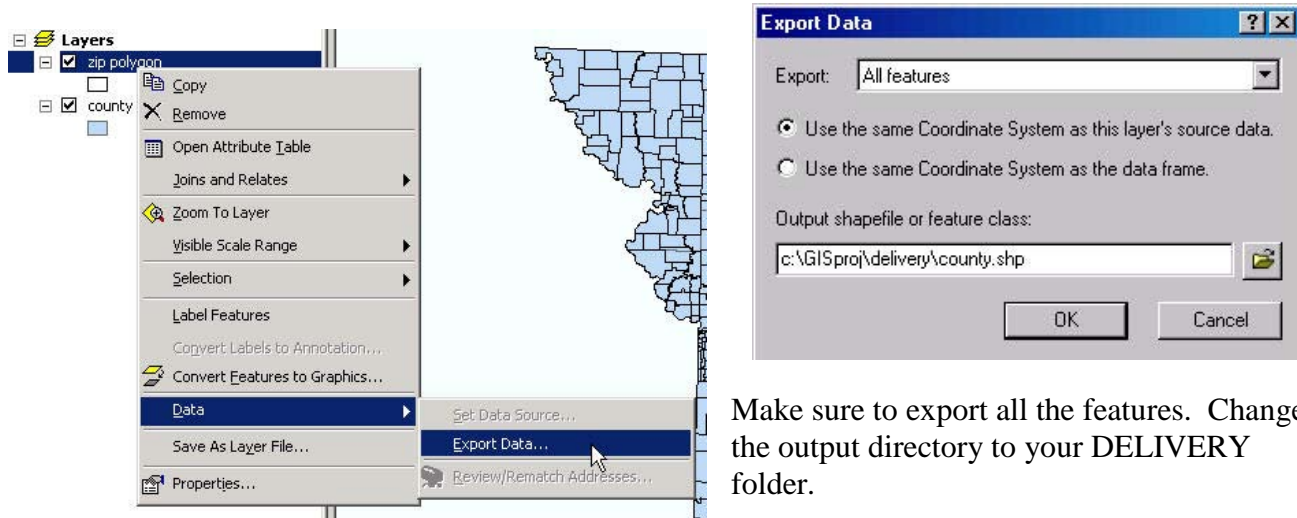

Open the copy of the MXD file
In the Table of Contents on the left side of the map is a listing of all the layers in your project.

Click on the Source tab to reveal the folder name for each layer.

<u>Copy all the layers into the delivery folder</u>

You can do this one of two ways:

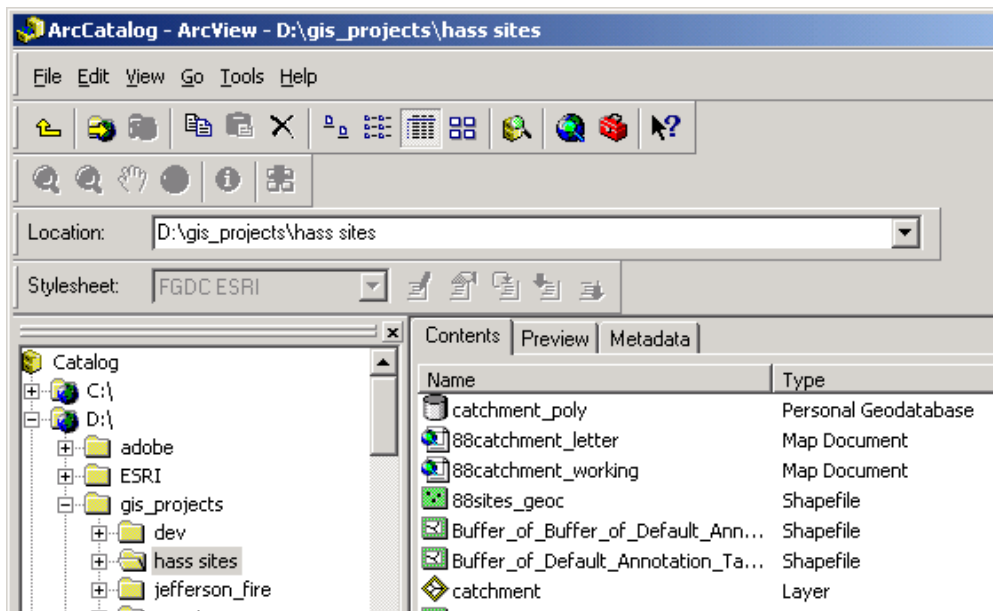1) Right click on the layer and export each data file into the DELIVERY folder.

Make sure to export all the features. Change the output directory to your DELIVERY folder.

- OR -
2) Open ArcCatalog.

Navigate to the location of each of the layers.
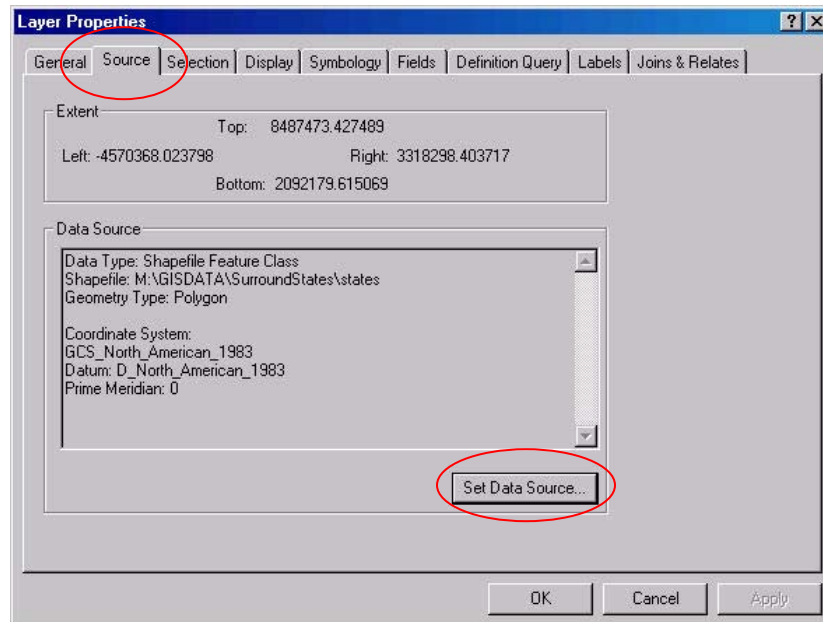Copy and paste them into your DELIVERY folder.
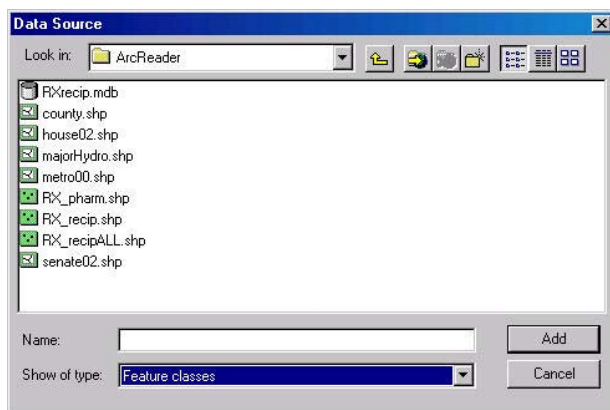
<u>Change the properties of the layer</u>

You must perform this step for EVERY LAYER IN YOUR PROJECT.

Right click on the layer and choose Properties.

Click on the Source tab. Select Set Data Source.
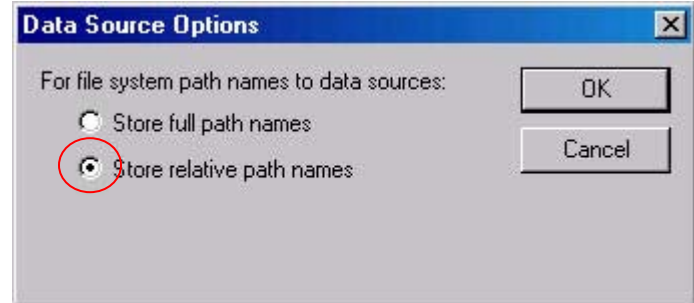
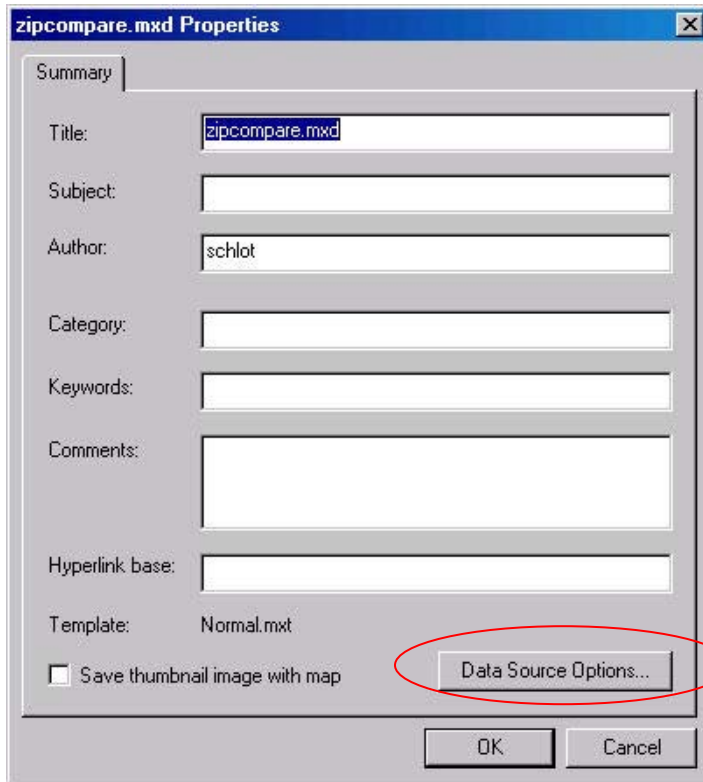Navigate to the DELIVERY folder.

Select the appropriate file for each layer in the DELIVERY folder.

Click ADD.

Continue changing the paths for each layer.

IMPORTANT NOTE: If you have tables in your project, it will not be possible to change their data source. You must delete and then add back in these tables. All joins referencing these tables will also need to be re-established using the new location.

Change the Map Properties

Under File > select Map Properties

Click Data Source Options …

Make sure to select Store Relative Path Names. (This is NOT the default.)

Data sources with relative path names will look for layers relative to the position of the MXD file. Changing the data source to relative path names means the project will not need to be saved to a specific drive letter or file name.

Save your project.

Zip the Entire DELIVERY Folder
Use a zip utility like WinZip to zip the entire folder of information into a single zip file. If your project has subfolders in it, make sure to specify the option for including subfolder. In WinZip, this is located in the lower left corner under Folders > Include subfolders.

Send the zip file
Send the zip file to its destination.

End User Unzips the Contents
For best results, the contents of the zip file should be unzipped into a new empty folder.