

VA's Newer Tools Bring Versatility, Flexibility

by Catherine N. Pfeil and Maureen Hoye

VA FileMan version 19 supports screen-oriented presentation and editing with the introduction of two new tools, ScreenMan and Screen Editor. ScreenMan is a tool with a new interface for accessing VA FileMan databases. The Screen Editor is a screen-oriented text editor that can be invoked for word-processing fields.

ScreenMan Is User Friendly

The marketplace has grown to expect user-friendly displays, which version 19 can address. New screen-oriented displays and text editing that work on both dumb terminals and workstations are a boon to users. Application

developers can create forms, much like input or print templates, to describe available fields for editing and display. Cursor keys take the user to the fields, and once there, the user may edit data in a highlighted edit window with enhanced editing functions.

Actually, the edit window is a sliding window to accommodate the text, which may exceed the window's width. The data will slide from left to right (beyond an apparent right margin) as the user reaches the end of the data.

ScreenMan processes data as transactions, meaning the database is updated when the user saves the data.

This is different from the scroll-mode templates that update the database one field at a time. Those familiar with previous versions will note that many VA FileMan conventions are intact. The user may jump to a specific field using the up-arrow-caption syntax (^caption) or may exit using the single up-arrow (^) to back out of an option.

An online quick-reference guide is always accessible. There is more information about ScreenMan in both the User Manual and the Programmer Manual for VA FileMan version 19. The following example is taken from the Kernel version 7 option of Edit User Characteristics, which was converted from a scroll-mode input template to a ScreenMan form.

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                                EDIT USER CHARACTERISTICS
NAME: JONES, JANE                                PAGE 1 OF 1
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                INITIAL: JJ                PHONE:
                NICK NAME: Jellylorum      OFFICE PHONE:

ASK DEVICE TYPE AT SIGN-ON:
                AUTO MENU: YES, MENUS GENERATED
                TYPE-AHEAD: ALLOWED

                TEXT TERMINATOR:
                PREFERRED EDITOR: SCREEN EDITOR - VA FILEMAN
-----
Exit      Save      Refresh

                                Press <PF1>H for help      INSERT
    
```

Figure 1. Edit User Characteristics.

BBS

The One and Only

Conferences Available:

0. Main Mail Folder
1. Programming Folder
2. Tips and Tricks Folder
3. MDC Folder
4. Job Opportunities Folder

File Areas Available:

1. M Programs & Utilities
2. MTA Membership Info
3. VA Public Domain Software
4. VA Documentation Only
5. MUGLIB Disk
6. Microsoft Windows 3.x
7. BBS and Host Programs
8. Communication Programs
9. Virus Checking Programs
10. MDC File Folder
11. Programming File Folder
12. Tips and Tricks File Folder
13. Job Opportunities File Folder
14. DHCP Patches
15. Miscellaneous Files

Phone: 301-942-5359

1200 or 2400 baud, no parity
bit, 8 databits, 1 stop bit.

SYSOP Ed Hinkle

Eye on Ease of Use

The second version's ScreenMan design includes the following features to improve efficiency and ease of use for both the designer and the user. These ScreenMan enhancements are incorporated in the future VA FileMan version 21.

Forms will be able to contain fields from multiple files that are related or linked. Users also will be able to select a record without exiting the form. Speed and efficiency will be improved by compiling forms into a global during loading and processing. A ScreenMan form may include elements or prompts that do not route the user to actual data dictionary fields, but are used by verification, or callback, routines only. A form-only field is one that can be put on a form and shown to the user, such as a yes or no question, without requiring definition in the data dictionary. The field results are not stored but could be used by the designer to perform a specific action, such as calling up a new screen.

Finally, a new screen-oriented, form-designer tool will help users design ScreenMan forms. Using cursor keys, the user will be able to select and move text or data elements around on the screen.

Screen Editor for Word Processing

VA FileMan now supports the Screen Editor as a second native editor, in addition to its Line Editor. The Screen Editor is a simple screen-oriented text editor used in word-processing fields. It supports simple full-screen functions such as navigating with cursor keys, scrolling from top to bottom, joining lines, and more. As with ScreenMan, an online quick-reference guide is always accessible.

The Screen Editor can be called in two ways—for a single edit session or as a preferred editor. First, to execute a single change with the Line Editor, at the Edit Option prompt, the user selects the utility submenu. At the Utility Option prompt, the user selects the Editor Change option. Then at the Alternate Editor prompt, the Screen Editor option appears.

Second, if Kernel V.7 is also in use, the Screen Editor may become the preferred editor. Using the Edit User Characteristics option, the user may choose from any editor supported in the Alternate Editor file. Any editor that can update text in the VA FileMan word-processing field format can be added to the Alternate Editor file. The user's preferred editor is stored in the New Person file (formerly the User file). Each time the user enters a word-processing field, the Screen Editor will be called automatically as the preferred editor. Any editor that can update text in the VA FileMan word-processing field format can be added to the Alternate Editor file. ■

Forward your FileMan questions or topics that you would like to see addressed in this column to the mail group FILEMAN on the VA's FORUM system. Or write to: VAISC6-San Francisco, Suite 600, 301 Howard Street, San Francisco, CA 94105.

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