

VA FileMan's Version 20 Now Available

by Ed Hinkle

Background

VA FileMan is a database management system consisting of more than 300 computer routines written in ANSI (American National Standards Institute) standard M. VA FileMan is a central package within the Decentralized Hospital Computer Program (DHCP) of the Department of Veterans Affairs and is used by programmers and end users alike.

With portability as a goal, VA FileMan runs on all major implementations of ANSI M and in hardware environments ranging from personal computers to mainframes. The database-management system includes features such as a report writer, a data dictionary manager, scrolling and screen-oriented data entry, text editors, a statistical tabulator, programming utilities, and tools to send data to other systems.

VA FileMan can be used as a database management system for data entry and output (as a minimum) or utilized in application packages with tools like filegrams, auditing, archiving, and statistics.

As a database management system, VA FileMan supports the entering, editing, printing, searching, inquiring, transferring, cross referencing, triggering, and verifying of information. It includes special functions to create new files, modify an existing file, delete entire files, reindex files, and create or edit templates.

VA FileMan's set of utilities includes the filegram, which moves file records from one computer to another; the ability to archive, which tracks changes to data in a field or to the file's structure (the data dictionary); and statistics gathering, which accumulates totals and subtotals of individual fields.

Long awaited, VA FileMan version 20 has many enhancements beyond previous versions. Following is a brief description of the upgrades that make this version a must-have.

Filegram-Based Archiving

Utility to Retrieve Archives

This utility accesses records archived with VA FileMan 19 (or later) by supplying an automated means for searching archive tapes or files and printing the records as they are located. There is no automatic restoration of the archived record. This utility requires Kernel 7.1.

Archival Activity Report

An archival activity report is printed at the end of the Move To Permanent Storage process. This report indicates information stored from the Archival Activity file such as archival activity number, archive device label information, archiver, and archived date. It also prints an index of all archived records, as well as search criteria used to select them.

Archive Device Labels

A new field added to the Archival Activity file holds labeling information for the selected archive device. The value in this field appears on the archival activity report mentioned above and will help locate an archive device, tape, or file containing a specific archived record.

Archived Records Index

All archives under version 20 have an index at the beginning of the Archive file. An entry in the index consists of the .01 value of the archived record along with all identifier values in the Source file. Using this index expedites the retrieval process.

Extract Tool

This utility offers a new way to extract data from the VA FileMan files and move them to another VA FileMan file. The extract tool can be used as a generic extractor by gathering data from a logical record and putting the data in a VA FileMan file, the Destination file. This file is available for further manipulation using VA FileMan options and utilities. Pointer, Variable Pointer, Date, and Set-valued fields from the Source file can be resolved (as an option) and their external values moved to the Destination file.

The extract tool will archive data from VA FileMan files. During the extract process, the Destination file can be labeled an Archive file. The Archive file can be manipulated by using VA

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KB Systems, Inc.	45
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FileMan options that do not involve any changes to its data or to its data dictionary.

Export Tool

The export tool is a new feature to format data from VA FileMan files for use by non-M applications. The user selects fields for export; specifies a format to use for export; and chooses entries to export. The data then can be sent to any device (i.e., the home device for screen capture or a host system file).

Foreign Format File

The new Foreign Format file holds the specifications of an export format. A file entry is used when an Export template is created.

New Template Types

The export tool uses two new kinds of templates. Selected Fields for Export

templates hold the fields chosen for export. Export templates are created when a Selected Fields for Export template is combined with a foreign format.

VA FileMan 20 (item S1 on the MTA order form), including more than 600 pages of documentation, is available to MTA members on 5 1/4" MS-DOS 1.2M floppy disks and 3 1/2" MS-DOS 720K disks for \$100. The documentation is also available separately (ask for item D1 on the MTA order form) for \$60. **M**

For further information on FileMan 20, see the *Focus on FileMan* column in this issue.

Ed Hinkle handles computer operations for the M Technology Association.

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