All Media Library

for Windows

version

4.2

Owner's Manual

by: Robert E. Latshaw, III   (C)1994-1995 Latshaw Software

2

Table of Contents   *PAGE*

Disclaimer

By using this program, the user agrees not to hold Latshaw Software, it's owners, or employees liable for any damages occured within the use of this program. Latshaw Software provides no warranty, either express or implied.

Recommendations and Limitations

Recommended equipment and settings:
- 386 or higher proccessor
- 4MB RAM (the more the merrier)
- Windows 386 Enhanced Mode with Virtual Memory
- 10MB available Hard Drive space (more for larger collections (3K per record*))
        *1.5K per record plus the same size available on HD for sorting and compressing
- 256 color video driver with resolution of [640x480] or [800x600 Large Font]

Recommended for SPEED enhancement (for large libraries over 1000 records):
- 486DX2, Pentium, or higher proccessor (50Mhz or faster)
- 8MB+ RAM
- Disk Caching (SMARTDRV or equivalent)
- CPU cache (internal and/or external)
- Virtual Memory set to "Permanent" Swap file (largest size acceptable by Windows)
- Local Bus or Accelerated Video card

Program Limitations:
Unregistered, AML will only allow you to enter up to 100 records. Once registered, AML will hold more than 2 billion records with certain features limited to 32,000 records. SORTING is limited to 32,000 records or less, and the LIST screen will only hold 32,000 records. These limitation numbers will go up with advancements in development.

Getting started

The first thing to do is to try out AML without entering a bunch of examples in yourself. AML comes with a sample library to practice with. To load the samples, simply hit the FILE button, then double-click the file entitled SAMPLES.AML. The rest is self explanitory for the most part. Play with the samples until you get a good grasp of AML. By default, AML loads the file RECORDS.AML everytime AML starts. It's a good idea to use this file as the file to keep your records. You can change the default startup file in the CONFIG section. DO NOT use the file SAMPLES.AML to keep your records in, because if you upgrade your program to a newer version, AML will overwrite the SAMPLES.AML with the new samples.

How AML works

The All Media Library is a very easy to use database for keeping track of all types of media such as books, videos, CDs, etc... Think of AML as an imaginary box of index cards with a lot of automated features. One of the advantages of the computer is that it can manipulate digital information much faster than a human could manipulate a box of index cards. Imagine if you had a collections of over 1000 video tapes and you decided one day that you would rather sort them by artist instead of title. It would probably take you hours, where the computer would take only seconds. Now imagine your collection grew to over 10,000 and a friend wanted to know how many Sylvester Stalone videos you had. Flipping through index cards would be slightly faster than going through all of your videos, but AML would be a thousand times faster.

AML keeps its imaginary index cards as "Records". AML uses a "Random Access" method for storing and retrieving records. This means at any given moment, AML can access record number 27,528 as quickly as record number 1. Because AML can sort records to your liking, the record number becomes insignificant to you, hence, the need for a "Catalog Number". A catalog number stays with a record even if its record number changes due to sorting. There are ways to avoid using a catalog number but it is recommended to use them. One way is to already have you media types sorted on the shelf. This can be a pain because every time you get something new, you have to make room in the middle for it, where if you use catalog numbers, you can simply place new items at the end of the shelf. Finally, if you have 3 movies on one tape, you can assign each movie record with the same catalog number. Then, when you tell AML that you're lending out one of the movies, it will automatically mark the other 2 movies as also being "On Loan". It is crucial that no 2 separate tapes have the same catalog number for that reason. Unless, of course, that they are a set; part 1 & part 2.

Entering your records into AML

To use AML, it's a good idea to assign every piece of media with a unique catalog number*, then enter each into AML. This will seem tedious. Especially if your collection is large. Once done, adding additional records later won't seem so bad. *NOTE: a catalog number is not required but is recommended, especially for larger collections where a lot of lending takes place.

To enter a record, you first need a blank record on the screen. If the screen contains a record, simply hit the "NEW" button, and AML will create a new record and place it at the end of all the others. If the screen already displays a blank record, simply click on the MEDIA TYPE field and that will place the cursor at the field. Next, fill in each field(Media type, title, artist, etc..) one by one, hitting the TAB key to go on to the next. Once done, AML will automatically store the record as soon as you go to do something else. You can hit the ADD button to create another record and the record you just enetered will be saved.

MEDIA TYPE
The media type field is for recording & displaying the type of media(Tape, CD, Etc...). Because AML keeps track of all types of media, it is important to signify what type it is. The media type field is a "Combo Box" which means you can either type in your own or pull down the list and choose. A fast way to use a combo box is to type the first letter or two, and then use the arrow keys on your keyboard to find it from there. It's a good idea to use the ones from the list because they will be spelled the the same in each record and searches will be acurate.

CATALOG NUMBER

Simply type in the catalog number of the item in this box. Choose an original catalog number that you created and labeled the item with, or, use an existing number that is already on the item such as a UPC code. If multiple items are on one piece of media, such as more than one movie on a video tape, then use the same catalog number for all the items on the tape. When you tell AML that you've lent something out, it marks ALL other records with the same catalog number as also being ON LOAN. The purpose for this is that you can have a separate record for each title on a video tape describing each movie but if someone borrows the tape, AML will then know to mark the other titles as being ON LOAN because they share the same catalog number...get it? Items with no catalog number are excluded from the search when lending. So, if you're planning not to use catalog numbers, make sure you don't enter anything in this field.

CATEGORY

The category field is used for placing the item into a category. You can either choose from the list of catagories given or type in your own. If the item is something that doesn't really have a category, then simply leave it blank. It's a good idea to use the ones from the list because they will all be spelled the the same and searches will be acurate.

TITLE

Here you enter the title of the item. Most titles are obvious for commercial items because they already have a title. If you have a home movie or a pack of photos, entering the right title can come in handy when searching for it later. A title like "Latshaw Family Christmas" would be good because that gives you 3 words to search by. No need for a year there because there is a field for that.

ARTIST(S)

The artist field is used for recording either the artist, creator, manufacturer, Etc... With some types of media such as baseball cards, you may want to use this field for placing the team name or the card manufacturer. Keep in mind that the flexability of AML is up to you. Be creative.

RATED

The RATED field is used primarily for movies, CDs, or videos that have been rated by some kind of censorship board. This field is a "dropdown combo" which means you can choose from the list or create your own rating.

PERSONAL RATING

The personal rating field can come in very handy. You decide how much you like the particular item on a scale from 1 to 10. This can be useful later when you want to search through the items that you enjoyed. This field is in a combo box like the media type field, and can be accessed by hitting the up and down keys on the keyboard or via the mouse.

QUANTITY IN SET

If you have a title with more than one piece of media holding it, enter the quantity here. For example, if you keep track of diskettes, and you're entering CorelDRAW! 5, you'd use only one catalog number but place a 16 in this field because CorelDRAW! 5 is contained on 16 disks. If you have a movie like "The Sound of Music" which is 2 tapes, you'd place a 2 here. This is useful in determining if you have the entire set when someone returns it.

VALUE
The value field is where you enter what the item is worth. You can either enter what you paid for it, what it's worth to you, or what someone should pay should they misplace it. This is handy if you lend someone something and they break it or loose it. You can then tell them what they owe you.

DATED
The DATED field used to say YEAR in earlier versions of AML but now gives you a little more flexability. This field used to allow only a 5-digit entry. It now allows a 10-digit entry for FULL date format(MM-DD-YYYY), dashes included. This is where you place the items date. This is when the item was created or originated. For example, if you were entering a book or video, you'd enter the copyright date here. This field is good if later on you want to search for titles that came out in a certain year. It is a good idea to use the MM-DD-YYYY format.

LOCATION
The LOCATION field is used for recording WHERE the item is physically located. For example, you may enter "Row B Shelf 22". This is handy for large collections. This is also handy for doing a visual inventory later on. A visual inventory is when you make sure nothing is missing. Simply pick a location: Example "Drawer 7". Do a search by LOCATION and lock on "Drawer 7". AML will display all records that are supposed to be in drawer 7. This way you can check that all pieces are accounted for. The location field is also handy if a friend comes over and browses through your library and decides to borrow something. You'll then know right where to find it.

NOTES
The final, and probably most useful field is the notes field. This is where you place detailed information about the items. Remember to think about future searches when filling in this area. For example, for music CDs and cassettes, I like to place the song titles here. That way, 10 years from now, if I can't remember who sang a certain song, AML can find out for me.

Lending out items

To lend an item out to someone you can either go to the record and hit the LOAN OUT button or, if you use catalog numbers, it's a good idea to use the BULK LOAN screen.

LOAN OUT BUTTON
If you don't use catalog numbers, The "LOAN OUT" button will simply ask you who's borrowing and then proceed to mark ONLY the current record as being ON LOAN. If you do use catalog numbers, the BULK LOAN screen will appear with the catalog number of the current record already in the list. Simply fill in who's borrowing and hit the LOAN OUT button. AML does the rest.

RECEIVE BACK BUTTON
The "RECEIVE BACK" button will simply go ahead and mark the current record as being returned. If the current record has a catalog number, AML will search for matching catalog numbers and also mark them as being returned.

BULK LOAN SCREEN
The bulk loan feature is similar to loaning and receiving from the main screen except that you don't have to go to each record when you have a lot to loan out or receive. The BULK LOAN & RECEIVE screen requires that you have a catalog number for each item that you're lending or receiving. This is another good reason for using catalog numbers. To use this feature, type in each catalog number, hitting ENTER after each one, to put it in the list on the left. Then, if you're lending, type in the name of the person who's borrowing. Then, hit the appropriate button whether you're loaning or receiving. That's it.

Searching through records

The search feature is one of the most powerful features of AML. it gives you the ability to search your entire database of records for specific things. In the lower right hand of the screen you'll see the blue "SEARCH BY" box. Here you choose which field you want to search. For example, if I wanted to see which items had the word "Love" in the **title**, I would choose "Title" here. Then fill in the "LOCK ON" box with the word "Love", or the text you want to search for. At this point you have 2 option. One, you can hit ENTER or hit the "LIST RECORDS THAT MATCH CRITERIA", either of which will pull up a list with all records that match the criteria given. Once in the list, You can double click an item in the list or print the entire list out. You're second option is to use the "NEXT RECORD" & "PREVIOUS RECORD" buttons, which will "flip" through ONLY the records that match the criteria. It will continue to do so until you set the "Search By" box to "NO CRITERIA", in which case, AML will allow you to "flip" through all of your records.

The LOCK TYPE box is used for determining HOW to search for the data you've entered in the LOCK ON box. TEXT (anywhere within) will lock on records which have the LOCK ON text located anywhere within the specified field. The VALUES types are used for numeric values such as PERSONAL RATING and VALUE. For example if you wanted to search all the values for items worth more than $50, you would type "50" in the LOCK ON box and set the LOCK TYPE to VALUES GREATER THAN making sure the SEARCH BY field is set to VALUE.

The LIST Screen

The LIST Screen can be called up by hitting the "LIST RECORDS THAT MATCH CRITERIA" button which is located in the lower right hand corner of the MAIN screen. Once aquainted with AML, you'll find yourself using the LIST screen frequently. If the SEARCH CRITERIA is RESET to NO CRITERIA, all of the records will be listed in the list screen. Otherwise, only the records that match the search criteria will be listed.

Once the list is displayed, you can scoll through it to find the record you're looking for. To view the full record, simply point to the record in the list and Double-Click.

SORT LIST
The sort list button will sort the list alphabetically from top to bottom. The sort reads the items in the list as they are listed, reading left to right. In other words, if you change the header type to show ARTIST in the left hand column, then the sort will sort by ARTIST.

SEARCH LIST

Search list conducts a search just the one from the main screen, except that it only searches the listed records. In other words, if you called up the list screen to show only your AUDIO CDs and then you searched the list for all items rated over 8, then the new list created would show the AUDIO CDs that rated over 8. There is no limit on how many times you narrow down your search by using SEARCH LIST.

PRINT LIST

The print list button will bring up the print list screen which will give you various forms of printing the records in the list.

PRINT LABELS

The print labels button will bring up the print labels screen. This is used for creating labels to place on your pieces of media. There are many types of labels available on the market today. You may even find labels specifically designed for a certain type of media such as video cassette labels or or audio tape labels. You have 3 lines of text to work with on each label and you can choose from Title, Artist, Catalog Number, and Location. To setup your labels to print correctly, first narrow the list down to the amount items it would take to make about 2 rows of labels. This way you won't waste a lot of labels before you get them aligned properly. Play with the label setup until your labels print perfectly, making sure to SAVE the settings each time. Then SAVE the setup with the SAVE SETTINGS button one final time. This way, the next time you go to print labels, it will be all ready for you. It helps to use the same type of labels each time. Keep in mind that only the records in the list screen will be printed. This is actually useful. It enables you to either print labels for every record or just ones that you've picked.

HEADER TYPE

The HEADER TYPE is used to determine what is shown in the list. Simply drop down the HEADER TYPE list and choose a new header type. AML will then adjust the list accordingly. This is handy for viewing by certain fields. If you choose the header type that shows the ARTIST in the left column and the TITLE in the right, you can look for an item by Artist. It's easier if you SORT the list after chossing a different header type.

HIGHLIGHTING RECORDS

You can "pick out" items in the list by HIGHLIGHTING them. This is accomplished by simply clicking on an item(one click). The item will then appear highlighted. If you make a mistake, simply click the item again to "unhighlight" it. Once you've highlighted the items you want, you have two options at this point. You can either have the list REMOVE the highlighted items or, have the list SHOW ONLY the highlighted items. To do this, make sure the mouse pointer is somewhere overtop the list and then click the *right* mouse button. The POPUP Menu will then appear giving you the two choices. Keep in mind that removing items from the list does not remove them from your records. In fact, you can't affect your records from anywhere in the list screen.

Sorting records

To sort your records, hit the sort button on the button bar. Choose what you want to sort by and what direction. Forward sorts A-Z, and reverse sorts Z-A. Then hit the SORT Button. That's it.

Importing & Exporting(FILE button)

Importing and Exporting is designed for the sole purpose of opening a new library or copying the currently open library file to another location(or format). When you edit, delete, add and sort, those changes are saved automatically to the currently open library. REMEMBER: ALL CHANGES ARE SAVED AUTOMATICALLY. There is no need to save what you have done. The feature was designed so that if you and a friend both have AML, you can put your entire library on a floppy and give it to him to browse at his lesuire. Likewise, if he gives you his, you can IMPORT it.

OPEN
To OPEN a file simply Double-Click on the file name. To find a file that is outside of your AML directory, click the DRIVE, double-click the DIRECTORY, and then double-click the FILE. Dont' be alarmed if you don't see all the files that are supposed to be in a directory. AML only shows the files that have an .AML extension.

SAVE AS
The SAVE AS button lets you save a copy of the open library, and then, makes the new file the open file. The "CURRENTLY OPEN" file is the one your working with on the screen. Any new changes are made to the currently open file.

COPY TO
The COPY TO button simply makes a copy of the currently open library. This is what you want to do if you want to give a copy of your library to a friend. Choose drive A: or B: from the DRIVE box, then type a name(up to 8 characters), and hit the COPY TO button. It's that easy. (MAKE SURE THE DISK IS IN THE DRIVE BEFORE PRESSING). If the AML library file exceeds the size of the floppy disk, you'll need to use PKZIP or some other kind of compression or disk spanning scheme. AML files compress very well. I've compressed a 3MB AML file down to only 100K.

MERGE into current library
The MERGE button will add ALL of the records of the file you choose to the currently open library. Select a file in the middle blue box by clicking it once, then hit the MERGE button. This function would be especially useful if you had a lot of records to enter. You could divide the work between many people and then merge all of the files together! THIS FUNCTION IS ONLY FOR REGISTERED USERS ONLY because of the simple fact that it would enable unregistered users to build libraries beyond the shareware version limit.

EXPORT AML.MDB FILE
This will create a copy of your AML library in Microsoft Access 2.0 format with the name AML.MDB. Your library can then be viewed and manipulated using Microsoft Access version 2.0 or later. Once you've opened the AML.MDB file in Microsoft Access, you can then export it from there to one of many other database formats like Foxpro, dBASE and more. The AML.MDB file will be created in the CURRENT directory which is shown in the lower left blue box.

Inventory totals

To see your inventory totals, hit the TOTALS button on the button bar. The inventory totals screen will apear. Click on any of the "MEDIA TYPE" boxes on the left to choose which items you want to calculate totals for. Then, when you've chosen all the media types to calculate, hit the "CALCULATE" button at the top of the screen. Once calculated, you then have the option to print the totals by hitting the PRINT button at the top of the screen. As of version 3.1, I added the "PIECES" field into the totals. PIECES refers to the total pieces of media. This figure is calculated by the sum of all the "Quantity in Set" fields.

Configuring AML

DEFAULT LIBRARY AT STARTUP
This gives you the option of having AML open a file other than RECORDS.AML when it starts. If the file is NOT located in the same directory as AML, you'll need to include its PATH.
Example: C:\MYFILES\LIBRARY.AML

MEDIA TYPES and CATEGORIES
AML comes with a default list of both MEDIA TYPES and CATAGORIES. You can define your own to be either added to AMLs list or replace the list woth your choices alone. Click on the "TAB" of either MEDIA TYPES or CATAGORIES. Then, in the 10 boxes below, type in your own. The blue box at the top decides if and how they will be added to the list.

In the MEDIA TYPES page, you have the option to place your "user-defined" media types automatically in the inventory totals screen.

The other options are pretty self explanitory. If you can't figure them out, don't change them.

Network Mode

The Network Mode is designed for network multi-user use but can be used by a single user. There are 2 modes: EDIT MODE & VIEW MODE. The first user to open a library file automatically gains EDIT MODE. EDIT MODE enables you to use all of the edit features of AML. If a second person on the network attempts to open the same library file, they will be forced into VIEW MODE which disables ALL edit features of AML. Any additional users opening the file will also be forced into VIEW MODE. VIEW MODE does enable the user to view records, search records, & calculate inventory. AML allows only 1 user to have edit features at a time. If the user who has the EDIT MODE in use switches into VIEW MODE, any other user can then switch to EDIT MODE(but only 1).

It is very possible that the user with EDIT MODE, suddenly lost power or had his/her computer "lock up". If this should happen, the library file would still think that the EDIT MODE was still in use and no one could ever edit it again. As a precaution, I've added a secret override feature. To override this condition and reset the library to enable EDIT MODE, go to the ABOUT AML screen which is located off the Help menu. Click on the Latshaw Software logo. Hit the OK button to leave and then check the NETWORK MODE menu. You should then have access to EDIT MODE. If this is set up on a network, you may want to memorize this paragraph and then delete it so that others won't know.

 *Note that: DELETING THE CONFIG FILE NAMED AML.CFG IS A CURE FOR MOST ERRORS AT STARTUP.

Network Setup

To setup AML on a network, install AML on the server drive first. You then have two installation options:

NETWORK option #1 (Common configuration) (RECOMMENDED)
Install AML on each network station separately. If a machine doesn't have it's own hard drive, then install it on the server in a separate directory which isn't used by another AML client. The next step is to tell each machine to use a common AML working directory. This is accomplished by going to each station and clicking the AML icon once to highlight it, then, hit Alt-ENTER to bring up the icon's properties. Then change ONLY the working directory to refer to the AML directory on the server that everyone will share. In other words, all stations must use their own copy of AML.EXE but work with all other files in a common directory.

NETWORK option #2 (Separate Configurations)
With option #2 you intall each AML copy on each station but leave the working directory alone. This will allow each station to have it's own configuration file. If you still want everyone to share a common library file, you'll need to go into each stations AML configuration and change the default startup file to refer to the servers drive and the AML file that everyone will share.

*AML has been tested on LANtastic 6.0 and Novell 3.12 networks and will most likely work on just about any other DOS or Windows based network.   This setup has changed since version 3.3

Technical Support

Technical support is available by calling Latshaw Software. Unregistered users only have access to installation questions. The number can be found in the ABOUT AML screen located off the HELP menu.

Registration

AML is released as "Shareware". IT MAY BE FREELY DISTRIBUTED. The program is fully functional. The only limitation is that AML will only hold up to 100 entries or "Records" until you register. To register AML, click the "REGISTER AML" option which is located under the HELP menu. You can register right over the phone if you have a credit card.

How to obtain the latest version

To obtain the latest version of AML, it can be downloaded from any one of the following ON-LINE services:

Compuserve (WINSHARE forum)
America Online (Windows Software Library)
Compusound BBS: 410-250-3480
TILT! BBS(Sysop: Steve Sunday): 410-521-4808   node2: 410-922-8103
The Boardwalk BBS(Sysop: James Davis): 410-352-5754   node2: 410-352-5810

How to Contact Latshaw Software

You can reach Latshaw Software by phone at 302-537-2899. Compuserve members can E-Mail a message to 74167,2013. America Online members can send E-Mail to "BobLatshaw". Internet E-Mail to either BobLatshaw@AOL.COM or 74167.2013@compuserve.com.

Thank you for using AML, and I sincerely hope you find it a useful tool in tracking your library.

Sincerely,

Bob Latshaw