



VendView for Windows

VendView is a viewer for VENDINFO.DIZ files. Such files contain detailed information about a software product, including descriptions, contact information, and distribution policy. VendView for Windows can also display VENDINFO.DOZ files, with their additional multimedia content. For more detailed information about VendView for Windows, select from the following topics:

The VENDINFO Product Information System

How to use VendView for Windows

Opening a VENDINFO file for viewing

Viewing information from a VENDINFO file

"Demonstrations"

Special multimedia content

Product description and related information

Platform requirements and recommendations

Price and benefits information

Ordering information (usually directly from publisher)

Other distributors of registered version

Technical support contact information

"Read-Me" section of front text

Packing-List section of front text

Installation section of front text

Other author-provided sections of front text

Warranty section of front text

License section of front text

Viewing files in the package (not yet implemented)

Testing the package containing a VENDINFO.DIZ file

Testing package authenticity (not yet implemented)

Testing for legal distribution (not yet implemented)

Testing for platform compatibility (not yet implemented)

Communicating with the publisher

Sending orders (not yet implemented)

Sending comments or trouble reports (not yet implemented)

Options: Configuring VendView

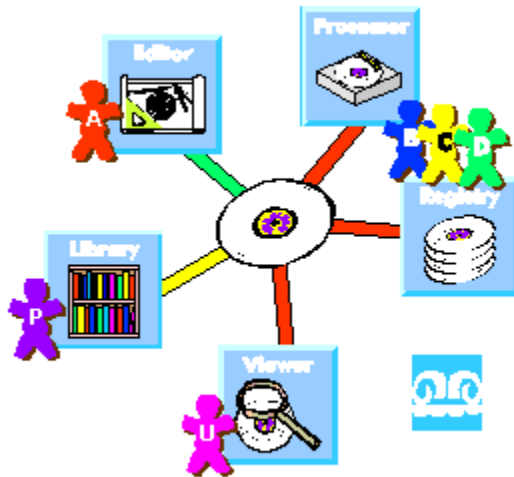
Rams' Island Software

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The VENDINFO Product Information System

VENDINFO...



...it has many faces

VENDINFO is a system for conveying software product information and distribution permissions from the author to distributors and users. A standard (public) file format allows a VENDINFO.DIZ file to carry extensive information in a compressed, efficient form. The associated toolset:



aids the author in constructing the record



allows the distributor to extract portions of the record, or to make distribution decisions based on its content, in a highly automated way



allows the user to view user-relevant product information quite easily.

VENDINFO provides unprecedented capabilities for:



Communication of product information and distribution policies from authors to users and distributors.



Enforceable distribution policies.



Automation of many aspects of package handling by shareware distributors of all types.

For more detailed information about VENDINFO, select from the following topics:

[Components of the VENDINFO System](#)

[Structure of a VENDINFO File](#)

[Industry Support and Endorsements](#)

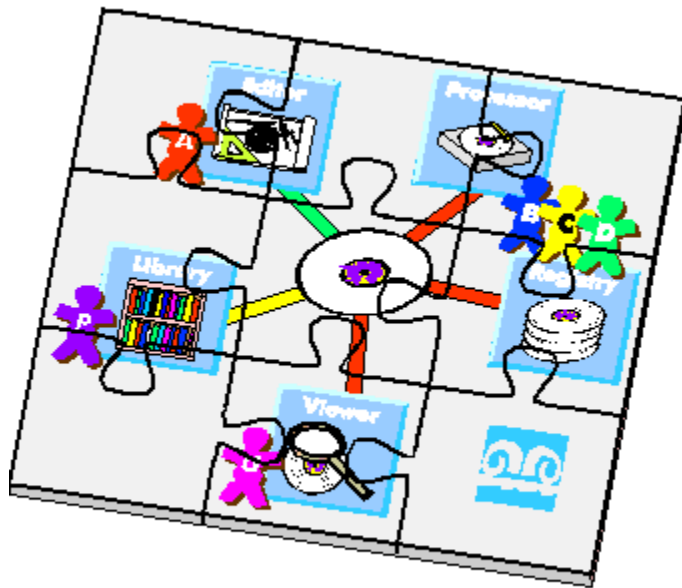
[How to Obtain VENDINFO Products](#)

[Rams' Island Software](#)



Components of the VENDINFO System

VENDINFO...



...it all fits together

The VENDINFO File

The VENDINFO "record" is the key. This is an efficiently compressed file (VENDINFO.DIZ) containing a great deal of information about the product, the author, and the product's distribution policies. The file-format standard describing the VENDINFO file is public, and has been subject to public comment since the first draft version in July 1993.

VENDINFO Editors

The VendEdit editor allows the product author or publisher to create VENDINFO.DIZ and VENDINFO.DOZ files for shareware and freeware products. VendEdit is itself shareware, with evaluation versions available from many sources.

VendComm is similar to VendEdit, but specialized for producing VENDINFO files for commercial and demonstration products. VendComm is a retail-only product available from Rams' Island Software.

VendPracs Processor

The VendPracs (pronounced "vend process") processor is a batch program used by distributors, such as BBS sysops, disk vendors, and CD-ROM publishers. VendPracs allows automated testing for distribution permission and automated extraction of VENDINFO information into text or database files.

VendPracs is shareware, with evaluation versions available from many [sources](#). Use of VendPracs by single-line, non-commercial BBSes is free.

VENDINFO Viewers

VendView (available for both DOS and Windows) is a simple menu-driven viewer that allows the end-user to see relevant portions of the VENDINFO data. The Windows version also supports the presentation of multimedia content of [VENDINFO.DOZ](#) files. Both viewers are free for ordinary use by end users, and are available from many [sources](#). They can also be licensed for such special uses as CD-ROM browsers, electronic demonstration kits, and electronic media kits.

Even without VendView, an ordinary text viewer will display the most basic information from a VENDINFO file..

Product Registry

The VENDINFO Product Registry is a collection of VENDINFO files available for searches and queries by subscription, BBS login, or mail-order query. This file collection is used by distributors, end users, and journalists to find products they're interested in, and by shareware information services (e.g., The Software Site on the World-Wide Web) to construct informative displays about products.

Authors may submit VENDINFO files directly, but they are also automatically extracted from the ASP, ESC, and JCSM CD-ROMs.

VendLib Library

The VendLib Library allows software developers to build VENDINFO access directly into such products as BBS programs and upload processors. It includes C and Pascal source, a C/C++ compatible library, and a DLL version.

Additional Utilities

Several additional utilities are available from [Rams' Island Software](#), including:

Vlextract, a Windows program that extracts VENDINFO files from all ZIPs on, for example, a CD-ROM.

DIZ2CSV, a script-driven DOS program that very efficiently generates records for a customized database from a collection of VENDINFO files.

DIZ2TXT, a script-driven DOS program that very efficiently generates a text file (letters, catalogs, HTML pages, etc.) from a collection of VENDINFO files (in development).

ViLibMgr, a Windows program that automates much of the work of managing a

collection of VENDINFO files (in development).

Lots More Coming!

Additional services for authors, users, and distributors are under consideration.
Suggestions are always welcome!



Viewing Product Information

This section of the VENDINFO file is displayed by selecting the View Product command from the menu, the Product tab, or the Product speedbutton on the toolbar. It contains information about the product itself, including names, categories, descriptions, etc. For more detailed information, select one of the following categories of product information:

Product Type and Distribution

Product Names

Product Version Information

Trade Association Memberships

Product Descriptions

Product Categories and Keywords

Package Filenames and Parts Lists

Product Screen Shots

Recreational Software Advisory Council (RSAC) Ratings



Structure of a VENDINFO File

VENDINFO.DIZ Files

The VENDINFO.DIZ file contains two sections. A human-readable front section contains information about how to use the VENDINFO file, and presents most of the basic information about the product in readable form. Optionally, it also includes "read-me" text, installation instructions, and the product's warranty and trial-use license.

The second section is a binary data record, compressed with a PKZIP algorithm, and appended to the file after the first section. This record has more than 750 fields of information about such things as:



Product name, date, and version



Preferred package filename, other parts of product, replaced versions



Product descriptions of varying length, categories, keywords



Required platform (CPU, operating system, memory, disk, features)



Contact information for author, for ordering, for tech support



Registration prices and benefits, acceptable forms of payment



Detailed distribution policy, in general and by distribution channel



Information about regional distributors and registration services.

VENDINFO.DOZ Files

There is also a specialized version of the VENDINFO file, called VENDINFO.DOZ (for Description Out of Zip), which can contain additional information for use by CD-ROM front ends, as an electronic media kit, as an electronic demonstration kit, and for other uses. As its name suggests, this file is not intended to be included inside a product package, as is the DIZ (Description In Zip) file.

DOZ files can carry significant multimedia content, including screenshots, icons, sound samples, a logo, advertising screen, press release, reviewer guidelines, company background, author biography, product features sheet, question-and-answer sheet, and other embedded, compressed files. They can even include scripted multimedia presentations. All of these features can be displayed by the free VendView viewer (Windows version), or extracted for other uses by appropriate VENDINFO processors.



Industry Support and Endorsements

VENDINFO...



...a winner every role

Support for the VENDINFO concept has been extraordinarily high throughout the industry. Authors, disk vendors, CD-ROM publishers, file-distribution services, Sysops, and BBS software manufacturers have all expressed their support, and many have pledged to build VENDINFO capability into their own software products.

In the discussion that follows, several special symbols are used:



Endorses VENDINFO standard



Offers Product(s) that use VENDINFO files



Offers Services that use VENDINFO files

The following shareware trade groups have formally endorsed the VENDINFO file-format standard as a means of conveying product and product-distribution information from authors to users and distributors.



Association of Shareware Professionals (ASP)



Shareware Trade Association and Resources (STAR)



Association of Shareware Authors and Developers (ASAD)



Educational Software Cooperative (ESC)

Several major on-line services, CD-ROM publishers, and file-distribution services are either requiring or strongly encouraging the inclusion of VENDINFO.DIZ files in all the software packages they receive for distribution. Included are:



Microsoft Network



Ziff-Davis Interactive



GENie Information Service



ASP CD-ROM



JCS Marketing CD-ROM



Author Direct Network



ESC File Distribution Network



Megapost File Upload Service



Software Distribution Network (SDN)

The following software manufacturers have "committed in principle" to support VENDINFO in their own software offerings. In the context of these products, "support" for VENDINFO means extracting relevant descriptive information automatically from VENDINFO files. It does not necessarily mean making decisions based on the product's distribution policy. VendPrCs will provide that capability.

BBSes:



PCBoard, Clark Development Co.



Wildcat!, Mustang Software, Inc.



Major BBS, Galacticomm



RBBS, RBBS Development Team



Searchlight BBS, Searchlight Software



TBBS, eSoft



Executive Host BBS, Steve Wood



MainLine BBS, Scott Green, City Limits Software



OmegaComm BBS, Larry Loiselle



PowerBBS for Windows, Russell Frey



ProBoard BBS, Philippe Leybaert



Sapphire BBS, Pinnacle Software



Tinyhost, Bruce Krobusek



UltraBBS, UltraBBS Software



Windowed Modem Environment, Jason Fesler

File Upload Processors:



CatScan, Mike Ortiz



CheckZip, Bill Hull



DIZIT, Robert Neal/CorpSoft



HoboScan, Floyd Hobson



THD ProScan, David Muir



TranScan, Craig Dunstan

File Distribution Processors:



WCFF, Online Computer Resources

Other Products:



BBSee Disk Cataloger, Martin Vallevand



Catalog-on-a-Disk, EmmaSoft Software Company, Inc.



Colorado Utilities Disk Manager, Micro Systems Solutions



SmartCat Disk Cataloger, Oakley Data Services



How to Obtain VENDINFO Products

Basic VENDINFO Tools

Basic VENDINFO packages (shareware and freeware) include:

VNDNFOxx.ZIP -- VENDINFO Toolkit (editor, processor)

VNDVUExx.ZIP -- VendView end-user's viewer (MS-DOS version)

VNDVUWxx.ZIP -- VendView end-user's viewer (Windows version)

VNDUTLxx.ZIP -- Utilities and frequently-updated data files.

VNDINFxx.ZIP -- VENDINFO.DIZ standard and information

A diskette containing evaluation versions of these products can be obtained from Rams' Island Software for \$6 (plus \$2 shipping and handling if outside North America). For many users, it will be more convenient to obtain them by download or CD-ROM. VENDINFO information and tools are available electronically from Rams' Island Software and from many other sources, including:

CompuServe ASP (lib 5), UKSHARE (lib 12), and EDFORUM (lib 2)

Ziff-Davis Interactive

Microsoft Network (ASP Forum)

CD-ROMs: ASP, JCSM, PsL, and ESC

BBSes on SDN, ADN, and ESC file-distribution networks

Special-Purpose VENDINFO Products

Several additional retail-only tools are available only from Rams' Island Software. These include:

VendLib -- Software developer's library for VENDINFO access

Viextract -- VENDINFO file extractor

DIZ2CSV -- Script-driven VENDINFO-to-database converter

DIZ2TXT -- Script-driven VENDINFO-to-text-file converter (in development)

ViLibMgr -- VENDINFO file collection management system (in development)

VENDINFO Product Registry

Subscriptions to the VENDINFO Product Registry can be obtained from Rams' Island Software.

VENDINFO Auto-Upgrade Plan

Rams' Island Software offers a VENDINFO Auto-Upgrade Plan which includes automatic mailing of new versions, new registration keys as needed, several of the retail-only utilities, and license rights for use of VENDINFO tools in electronic media and demonstration kits, all for a very low annual fee.



Rams' Island Software

Rams' Island Software is a small software development firm located in Parker, Colorado.

Technical Support

We provide full support for our registered shareware and retail customers. Limited support is available for unregistered users attempting to evaluate our products. We'll also help where we can with our free products, but support for them is necessarily limited, and is generally available only in electronic forums and by e-mail.

We support our products in several electronic forums, as well as by mail, BBS, phone, and e-mail. Forums include:

CompuServe ASP, UKSHARE (section 11), and EDFORUM (section 2)

FidoNet ASP and Shareware forums

RIME ASP, Shareware and VENDINFO forums

Contact Information

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USA**

**303-841-2848 (Voice)
303-841-6269 (Fax/BBS)**

**Internet: ramsisle@abwam.com
CompuServe: 76244,324
FidoNet: 1:104/333
RIME: 1235**

**WWW: <http://delta.com/ramsisle/ramsisle.htm>
FTP: <ftp://ftp.abwam.com/pub/ramsisle>**



Product Type and Distribution

Although most products that use VENDINFO files are software products, other product types are possible. The available **nature of product** values are:

Software

Hardware

Data file, as in data base, spreadsheet macro, clip art, etc.

Text file

Book, as in shareware book distributed electronically

Magazine, as in electronic magazine

Catalog, as in vendor's electronic catalog

Video

Another property that the product has is its **basic distribution type**. Possibilities are:

"Commercial" product, not distributable as shareware

"Commercial" product, intended for distribution with other products

Registered version, not distributable as shareware

Registered version, intended for distribution with other products

Shareware, subject to distribution restrictions

Shareware, freely distributable by all channels

Freeware, copyrighted but freely distributable and useable

Demonstration product, freely distributable by all channels

Public domain, freely distributable by all channels

Retired product, removal from distribution requested

Test version of product, not for further distribution

For more information about some of these types, see [Shareware, Freeware, and Other Wares](#)

For most of these values, this field alone indicates that the product is either freely distributable, or not distributable at all. For a very common value of this field, however:

Shareware, subject to distribution restrictions

the VENDINFO data record contains a detailed specification of the product's distribution policies, both in general and for 13 different shareware distribution channels:

BBS

BBS File-Distribution Networks

Mail-Order Disk Vendors

CD-ROM Marketed to End User

One-Site Rack

Multiple-Site Rack Distributors

Book Enclosure Diskettes

Subscription Service (disk-of-month)

Magazine "Cover" Disk

TV/cable/satellite Broadcast

1-900-Type Phone Distribution

Installation by Consultant, VAR, etc.

Undescribed Distribution Mechanisms (i.e., "other")

These detailed distribution policies are not generally of interest to end users, and VendView does not display them (for more information about the nature of such policies, see [distribution policies](#)).

You can, however, perform a basic [distribution-policy test](#) using the Test Distribution command.



Shareware, Freeware, and Other Wares

VENDINFO is intended for use with all forms of software distribution, from "retail" software to shareware and freeware. We're all familiar with the software sold through retail stores, but some users may need an explanation of the other distribution methods.

Shareware isn't really a type of software. It's a particular method of distributing software (and perhaps other products, such as books, electronic databases, clip art, etc.). The distinguishing feature of shareware is its "try before you buy" nature. An "evaluation" or "shareware" version of a product is distributed, often quite freely via BBSes, disk vendors, CD-ROMs, or by hand from user to user. Users can try the evaluation version for a trial period defined by the author of the product. If the user finds the product useful, and chooses to continue using it beyond the defined evaluation period, the user is expected (and legally obligated) to "register" the product. If the user chooses not to register the product, then the user is expected (and legally obligated) to "uninstall" it and not use it further.

"Registration" means having the user's name and address recorded, for the purpose of distribution of update information, etc., and paying the license fee for the product. The license fee for each shareware product will be clearly stated in that product's registration instructions. With registration, you get anything from the simple right to continue using the software to an updated program with printed manual, and perhaps more.

There are excellent shareware products, absolutely on a par with the best retail software. There are also very poor shareware products, absolutely on a par with the worst retail software. :-) And, just like retail software, there's everything in between.

The advantage you have with shareware is that you can try it out for free, or for a small duplication fee paid to a disk vendor, without committing yourself to the product. Even the best retail stores, with their offers of money-back guarantees, can't give you this advantage. You can perhaps try out a text editor from a retail store, and take it back if you're dissatisfied. Try taking a dozen text editors, though, and telling the store owner that you're going to try them all and bring back the eleven you don't want. :-)

In many cases, shareware also provides a closer tie between author and customer. When you call for technical support, you might well be talking directly to one of the developers of the software, rather than to the separate customer support apparatus necessitated by many larger retail software companies. This arrangement not only improves the quality of support you receive, but places the developers in more direct contact with their users, and the quality of the software often improves as a result.

On the other hand, some users feel more comfortable with the "name brand" approach, believing they'll get better results from well-known companies, even when the exact attributes of the product are less well known. You'll have to resolve this trade-off yourself.

In any case, these distinctions are blurring somewhat as more "commercial" software publishers explore shareware distribution channels, and as more shareware products find their way onto retail racks.

Shareware as Distinguished from Other, Similar Things

It is perhaps useful to define several somewhat similar terms, so you can compare and contrast their properties.

shareware -- Copyrighted software whose owner allows distribution and use of a "try before you buy" evaluation version, and requires payment if use is continued beyond a specified evaluation period.

freeware -- Copyrighted software whose owner allows free use without registration, and often unlimited distribution rights, as well

public-domain software -- Software whose owner has explicitly placed it in the public domain, thereby renouncing any copyright rights. Such software may be used, modified, or distributed in any way desired, including commercial use. Under the Berne Copyright Convention, software never enters the public domain by default. Explicit, clear action by the author is required.

retail (sometimes called "commercial") software -- Software that is sold in the traditional manner ("pay first, then you get the software"), regardless of whether it's sold in stores or by mail or phone order.

Copyrights and Other Legal Aspects of Shareware

Shareware products, like retail software products, are copyrighted works. For all nations that are signatories of the Berne Copyright Convention, such works are copyrighted automatically upon publication, with no action required on the part of the authors. (*Registration* of the copyright is a different matter, with legal implications that are beyond the scope of this brief discussion.)

Under the terms of the Berne Convention, copyrighted works are automatically the protected intellectual property of their authors. With very limited "fair use" exceptions that mostly don't apply to software, such works can be used or distributed only if the author explicitly allows it, and under the terms specified by the author. The fact that the author allows an "evaluation" version to be distributed -- freely or with restrictions -- does not cause the author to give up any other rights provided by copyright law. That's why shareware works as a distribution method. Authors can allow vendors and BBSes to distribute their evaluation versions, and users to try them out, while still maintaining full ownership of the product, and full control over the terms under which it can legally be evaluated and used.

Shareware is clearly based on trust. The author trusts the user to actually pay the registration fee, and the user trusts the author to provide the registered version and any promised registration benefits, to support the product, etc. It's not common for a shareware author to take legal action against an individual shareware user based on the legal rights discussed above. In fact, most shareware authors are supportive folks with very positive attitudes toward their users.

However, our purpose here is educational. We don't intend to be lecturing you, but presumably you're interested in understanding these matters, or you wouldn't be reading this help text. It's therefore worth pointing out just how seriously these intellectual-property protections are taken by the law. Under U.S. law, the penalties for

deliberate infringement of software copyrights can be as high as \$20,000 per copy of the infringed copyrighted material, even if no actual monetary loss can be shown. And, of course, actual damages, court costs, attorney's fees, etc. can also be claimed. In addition, criminal prosecution is possible if the infringement was done for the purpose of financial gain.

It is therefore worthwhile to pay attention to the rights which an author grants you. These are conveyed through licenses for use and distribution, which are discussed in a separate section.



Product Names

A product may be referred to by several names, for different purposes.

The **product name** is the basic name by which the product is known. An example is "WordStar".

The **name extension** is an additional phrase that may be tacked onto the product name to create a full product title. An example is "Document Processor". Separation of this phrase from the product name allows the product name to be used alone ("WordStar") or the two to be used together ("WordStar Document Processor").

Several product package filenames may also apply to each product.



Product Version Information

There are three fields which contain information about the current version of the product.

The **version number** is intended to contain a number like "1.00" or "2.13", where the units digit to the left of the decimal point represents a major version, the tenths digit represents a minor version, and the hundredths digit is reserved for between-release version numbering. The two most significant digits of the version number are usually present in the compressed package filename, as in INCXT11A.ZIP, which is version 1.10. (This is the most popular version numbering scheme in the industry, and most publishers use it, but some products may use different version-numbering schemes.)

The **version date** is usually the date on which a particular version is initially released.

The **reason for version** field allows the publisher to indicate briefly the new features, bug fixes, etc., that are the reason for release of this version.



Product Descriptions

The VENDINFO file contains six different **product descriptions**, of varying length:

60 bytes

120

250

450 (FILE_ID.DIZ size)

750

1500 bytes

This isn't as wasteful of space as it might sound, since all unused space is filled with null characters and then compressed very efficiently.

The large number of description lengths is intended to satisfy the needs of BBS files databases and disk vendor catalogs, as well as users. VendView actually displays only two (450 and 1500), since that provides both brief and complete descriptions that should be sufficient for users.



Product Categories and Keywords

VendView comes with the file CATEGORY.INF, which contains a hierarchic list of numeric **category** codes and associated text descriptions. Here's a sample:

```
1400000 Business
  1401000 Business finances
    14010100 Business accounting
    14010200 Point-of-sale systems
    14010300 Billing systems
    14010400 Purchase order systems
    14010500 Payroll systems
  14020000 Inventory systems
; 14030000 remaps to 14040100
;   14030100 remaps to 14040101
  14140000 Equipment use & maintenance
  14040000 Project management
    14040100 Project bidding & costing
      14040101 Decision analysis tools
    14040200 Project scheduling
```

The VENDINFO record contains five such category codes, one of which is designated as the primary category.

VendView will always display the numeric category codes assigned by the author or publisher. If you have also installed the CATEGORY.INF file in the same directory with VENDVIEW.EXE, it will display the corresponding text descriptions.

There is also a **keywords** field which contains words that should be useful in product searches.



Package Filenames and Parts Lists

The **compressed package filenames** associated with the product are a different matter from the product name. These are the names of the compressed (ZIP or similar) files by which the product may be distributed.

Thus, a package name of INCXT11A might represent the package INCXT11A.ZIP, or INCXT11A.ARJ, etc. (depending on the compression program used), or might even represent the same set of files distributed in uncompressed form on a diskette.

The **this package** field indicates the name of the current package. Together with the "list of parts" field (see below), this can be used to determine whether the current package contains the entire product, or is the primary or secondary package of a multipart set.

When a software product is too large to fit on a single diskette or in a single compressed file of manageable size, it is broken into multiple **parts**. In a multipart set, the "main" VENDINFO.DIZ file is placed in the primary package, and contains complete information about the product. A somewhat briefer secondary VENDINFO file is placed in the other packages. The data record is essentially identical in main and secondary VENDINFO files, but much of the front text is omitted from the secondary ones.

The **list of parts** contains the names of the packages that make up the product.

In addition to the regular list of parts, there is a **list of CompuServe parts** for products posted on CompuServe, and similar environments. CompuServe's software has in the past allowed only 6-character filenames, and in any case they generally prefer that the version number be left out of the name. Thus, the entry for INCXT11A, above, might be shown here as INCXTA. These alternative filenames might also be used by other distributors with similar needs.

If the product is an update of a previous version, the **old packages replaced** field should contain the filename prefixes of the older packages that are now obsolete. This helps distributors to eliminate older versions.



Product Screen Shots

Many software publishers make screen shots of their products available for use by journalists, disk and rack vendors, etc. These screen shots are also beginning to find their way onto CD-ROMs designed for in-store displays, and probably have lots of other uses. Often, the author is in the best position to select a screen display that shows the product to its best advantage.

This field should contain the filename extensions of the types of screen shots available, if any. Examples are PCX, CGM, TIF, etc. If ordinary photographs available in hardcopy, the code "FLM" should also appear on this list.

This information is aimed mainly at product reviewers and distributors who may be using VendView, rather than at end users.



Recreational Software Advisory Council (RSAC) Ratings

The Recreational Software Advisory Council (RSAC) is a non-profit council formed by the personal computer software industry. Its purpose is to provide an objective content-labelling system for software, especially games, in order to allow consumers and distributors to be fully informed of the content of those products before downloading, purchasing or running them.

RSAC ratings are intended to be descriptive, rather than judgmental. Thus, RSAC ratings describe the actual content of a product in several areas (violence, nudity/sex, and language), rather than asserting that the product is "suitable for children over 13", or some similar judgment. Parents differ greatly in their concerns about game content, with some much more concerned about violence, others about sexual content, etc. This descriptive system allows the consumer to determine, based on an actual knowledge of its content, whether or not the material is suitable for the consumer or the consumer's children.

RSAC ratings are displayed in the Product Description area if the product actually has an RSAC rating. The ratings provide information in each of three categories:

Violence

Nudity/Sex

Language

For each category, there is a "level" indicator:

ALL

1

2

3

4

where "ALL" indicates no objectionable content, or extremely mild content, in the category, and the numerical values vary from 1 (mild) through 4 (extreme). Unless the category has an "ALL" rating, there will also be an associated descriptive phrase, indicating the nature of the content. For example, the phrase "Crude or explicit sexual references" might appear next to a 4 rating in the language category.

Thus, a complete RSAC rating for a game with substantial violence, but no sexual content or offensive language, might look like this:

Violence: 4 Wanton and gratuitous violence

Nudity/Sex: ALL

Language: ALL



Platform Requirements and Recommendations

This section of the VENDINFO file is displayed by selecting the View Platform command from the menu, the Platform tab, or the Platform speedbutton on the toolbar. It contains information about what kind of hardware and software platform the product requires. It can specify the type of computer, operating system, memory types and amounts, and hard drive storage. In addition, there is a long list of special features which may be required or recommended for use with the product.

CPU and Operating System Platform Requirements

This section indicates what computer and operating system the product requires.

The **basic processor type** can currently be any of these:

Intel 80x86

Apple Macintosh

Apple II

If one of these is selected, there may be a more specific requirement for a specific **level** of the machine. Like most of the platform information, there may be both a minimal and a recommended choice. For example, if the program will run on an original IBM XT, but really needs a 286 for acceptable performance, "8086/8088" would be the indicated minimum and "80286 (AT)" would be the recommended value.

Similar choices are available for the **operating system**. A typical choice might be "Windows 3.1" as a minimum, and "Windows 95" recommended.

If there is sufficient demand for a machine type not on the list, or if we're made aware of machine levels or operating systems that aren't covered and should be, we'll be happy to extend our coverage. There is room within the existing VENDINFO standard for such extensions.

Obviously, there are some products (e.g., a shareware book packaged as a text file) for which these values are all irrelevant. In this case, all values will be blank.

Other Basic Platform Requirements

If the product has requirements for **clock speed** (in Megahertz), **memory** (in Kilobytes), and **disk storage** (in Kilobytes), they'll appear in this section. Values that don't matter are left as zeroes.

Platform Features

There are lots of **platform features** which a program may or may not support or require. Examples are particular video adapters, printers, input devices, etc. This section contains a long list of such features. For each one, any one of these values may be indicated:

Irrelevant -- Presence or absence of this feature will have no effect on whether or not this product works.

Supported -- This particular feature is specifically supported by the product.

Recommended -- It is recommended that this feature be present if the product is used.

Required -- This feature must be present, or the product won't work.

Won't Work -- If this feature is present, the product won't work.

Unknown -- Self-explanatory.



Prices and Registration Benefits

This section of the VENDINFO file is displayed by selecting the View Prices command from the menu, the Prices tab, or the Prices speedbutton on the toolbar. It contains information about the prices charged for the product, or for the registered version, if the product is shareware. Many publishers provide additional benefits for registered users, and they are listed in this section, as well.

Registration Prices and Other Charges

This section contains product prices, and shipping and handling charges, along with the applicable currency. It should be noted that these are often the prices for the product if ordered directly from its publisher or principal distributor, within the geographical area in which that publisher engages in direct sales. There may also be "Other Distributors" responsible for other geographical areas, or providing different ordering or other services (e.g., credit cards).

Two different registration prices (and associated benefits) may be specified for the product. This is intended to cover situations in which different packages are offered at different prices.

Many authors and distributors have multiple "shipping and handling" charge rates, depending on the location of the recipient. The VENDINFO record distinguishes shipping charges for the following cases:

Within same country as sender

North America

South America

Europe

Asia

Africa

Pacific Rim

Site Licenses

Many publishers offer site licenses on their products. Such licenses allow multiple users, typically in the same office or company, to use the product based on a single purchase contract. This arrangement typically costs the users a fair amount less than the retail purchase price. At the same time, cost to the publisher may be substantially lower, as there is usually a single person to whom technical support is given and only a single copy of the software provided. (Additional user manuals may be offered at a specified price per copy.) Discount rates certainly vary depending on the circumstance, and must be determined from the author/publisher of the individual product.

Non-Shareware Versions (NSVs)

If the product is shareware, there may also be a non-shareware version (NSV) similar to

the shareware product, but with enhanced features and a higher price. The use of an NSV allows a shareware publisher to offer a fully functional shareware product -- in which the evaluation version offers all the features of the registered version -- while still offering additional features in the form of a retail-only product.

Users who need only the features in the shareware version have an opportunity to fully evaluate that product before registering. Users who find features of the retail-only product more appealing will at least have seen a sample of its likely behavior, and will often find that the publisher offers a money-back guarantee.

Registration Benefits

There are a wide range of benefits that may be provided to registered users, and quite a few are especially encoded in the VENDINFO record. This area of the VENDINFO record is especially relevant in the case of shareware products, for which the term "registering" is often used to mean the action of paying for the product. Some of the registration benefits may apply to retail products, as well, and may be available only if you send in the registration card.

Please note that the listing of a registration benefit such as technical support by voice telephone does not necessarily imply that no such support is given to unregistered users. Here are the benefits encoded in the VENDINFO record, along with explanations when they seem appropriate:

Additional data files

Additional programs

These may be similar programs, enhancements, or additional unrelated programs. Similar programs are often provided upon registration of games and educational software, where "more of the same" is often wanted by customers. Enhancements are accessories and tools that can aid the user of the original product. Unrelated programs are also accessories and tools that can aid the user, but their function is unrelated to the behavior of the original product. In any case, these may be from the same publisher, other publishers via licensing agreements, or perhaps shareware versions of other programs.

BBS or other online support

Branding with user's name

This may involve on-screen display of the registered user's name, or display on printouts, etc.

Bug notices

Cheat codes

"Cheat Codes" are used mainly in games, and they may allow access to easier playing modes, instant travel to a specified point in the game, etc.

Commissions

Some publishers pay registered users who promote other registrations.

Contests

Examples: Best game design, Best database design, Most imaginative use.

Customization

This may involve adding user-specific data to the screens, printouts, etc.

Data conversion utilities

These are additional programs to convert data to or from competing or complementary programs.

Data conversion from older versions

New versions of a program that use a different file format may not be usable by people who have built up a database with an older version. Many products provide a data conversion program to registrants.

Discounts on other programs, merchandise, etc.

Example: Discount on a Thesaurus with a Word Processor.

Enhanced program functionality

Free goodies

Typically, unrelated merchandise (pencils, coffee mugs, etc.)

Future versions

Guarantee

Hints

Examples: Where the rubies are buried in the 3rd level maze, How to best design a database with a DBMS, Writers' guidebooks with a Word Processor

Latest version

Lifetime support

Newsletter

Preprinted forms

Pre-printed forms can produce nicer looking output (especially on dot matrix printers). Examples: Invoice forms, Rolodex cards, Checks

Printed manual

Quick reference materials

Examples: Quick reference cards, Keyboard overlays

Record limitation removal

Registration-Reminder-Screen removal

Many evaluation versions have a reminder screen that pops up on entry or exit, to remind the user that the product hasn't yet been registered. Such screens are removed in the registered version.

Repeated delay, slowdown removal

Sample data files, etc.

Examples: Franklin Roosevelt's family tree set up for a Genealogy system (his family tree is extremely interesting, by the way), Extra pictures to color for a coloring book, Pre-setup databases with a DBMS.

Source code

Subscription to updated data

Examples: Zip code lists, Postal/UPS rates, Lottery results, Baseball card databases, Tax tables

Time-limit removal

Tutorial

Update notices

Updates free

Voice telephone support

Watermark removal

The shareware version shows, say, "unregistered version" on the screen or on printouts. The registered version eliminates this or allows for the user to put a name or message there.

Price/benefit information that is not specially encoded in the VENDINFO record may appear in the "Additional Price/Benefit Information" field.



Ordering Information

This section of the VENDINFO file is displayed by selecting the View Orders command from the menu, the Orders tab, or the Orders speedbutton on the toolbar. It contains contact information to enable users to purchase the registered version and other products and services. It also indicates the various forms of payment accepted by the principal ordering source (usually the author or publisher).

Please note that there is a separate section containing information about Other Distributors of Registered Version. In many cases, products have regional distributors handling registrations for a particular geographical area, or special distributors who offer services not obtainable directly from the author/publisher. Such services might include on-line registration, acceptance of credit cards, etc.

Product Ordering Contact Information

This section of the VENDINFO record provides contact information for ordering registered versions of the product, and perhaps other related products and services. This may or may not be the same as the information listed elsewhere for technical support.

This section includes a full set of **mailing address**, **telephone numbers**, and **electronic addresses**. The fields containing normal address and telephone number information should be self-explanatory. Separate help information is provided for each of the electronic address fields.

Credit Cards Accepted

Credit cards which are specially coded in the current VENDINFO standard (and can therefore be tested by automated tools) are:

Access Eurocard

American Express (and its relative, Optima)

Diner's Club

Discover

MasterCard

Visa

Any additional credit cards can be listed under "Other". If you believe additional credit cards are of general interest, and should be explicitly coded in the VENDINFO standard, please let us know.

Other Acceptable Forms of Payment

This section allows the publisher or distributor to indicate which of several forms of payment are acceptable for registering the product. Acceptable forms of payment vary greatly with both geographical location and with available banking arrangements. For example, we've heard of bank charges as high as \$40 for one U.S. bank to cash a

check written in U.S. dollars, but drawn on a bank in another country. Other U.S. banks will do similar transactions for small fees, or sometimes even no fees.

We've tried, wherever it makes sense, to distinguish between "hard" currencies, which are generally stable and convertible, and "soft" currencies, which are not. If you pay in a soft currency, the recipient may be unable to convert the payment to his own funds, or may find that inflation or fees have greatly reduced its value.

We've also distinguished the source of a monetary transaction, where it makes sense. With checks, in particular, it may make a big difference whether or not the originating bank has a branch in the recipient's country.

The currency in which a payment is denominated can obviously be a factor, but it can also interact with the source in surprising ways. Several U.S. authors have reported that they can easily cash U.S. checks in U.S. dollars and, say, French checks in French francs, but are unable to deposit a French check written in U.S. dollars.

Many authors accept cash in the mail, though most report that they receive such payments only rarely. Some advise registered mail, and all would suggest that such payments are at the sender's risk.

Bank Account

If you wish to pay by electronic funds transfer, you'll need to provide your bank with several pieces of information about the recipient's bank account. These include:

Name of bank

Address of bank

Bank's number in whatever numbering system is used in its area. In the U.S., this is the American Banking Association (ABA) number.

Recipient's bank account number.

For publishers and distributors who accept such payments, this information should all be present in the **bank account** field.

Electronic Addresses

The VENDINFO file can store several forms of electronic address. Electronic addresses are stored for each of several purposes:

Contacting the publisher

Ordering the product

Obtaining technical support.

For more detailed information regarding the various electronic address types, select from the following:

On-Line Services

America OnLine

CompuServe

Delphi

GEnie

Prodigy

BBSes and Networks

Bulletin Board Systems

FidoNet

Internet

RIME

There is also an "**Other**" field for electronic addresses not covered by the list above. In particular, the VENDINFO standard does not yet provide explicitly for listing Internet Uniform Resource Locators for **FTP sites** and for **World-Wide Web sites**. Publishers who provide such sites will probably list that information in the "Other" field.

Electronic Address: Bulletin Board System

A Bulletin Board System (BBS) is a computer system that can be called, over ordinary telephone lines, by another computer. Doing so requires a modem and a communication software package. Many users make use of BBSes to obtain software, communicate about it with others, obtain technical support, and lots more. Many publishers maintain a "product support BBS" on which they communicate with their users, providing information and support, and perhaps accepting orders.

Specifying a BBS contact point involves three separate pieces of information that may be relevant. The **BBS Name** and **BBS Phone** should be self-explanatory. In addition, a **User Name** may be provided, so that you can send messages about the product to the right person when you log into the BBS. If the BBS is a dedicated product-support BBS, this information may be unnecessary, but if the author or publisher merely maintains a presence on a BBS, you may need to use this information to make contact.

Electronic Address: America OnLine

America OnLine is a commercial information service accessible via modem throughout the United States and Canada. It provides message forums and download libraries on a variety of topics, as well as Internet and World-Wide Web access.

If an America OnLine electronic address is shown in connection with the product, electronic mail can be used to place orders, obtain technical support, etc.

The toll-free America OnLine Customer Service phone number for the United States and Canada is 1-800-827-6364, should you wish to contact them.

Electronic Address: CompuServe

The CompuServe Information System is the largest of the worldwide commercial information services accessible via modem. It provides message forums and download libraries on a variety of topics, as well as Internet and World-Wide Web access.

The major software-related trade associations maintain an electronic presence on CompuServe ("GO ASP" to reach the Association of Shareware Professionals; "GO EDFORUM" to reach the Educational Software Cooperative; "GO UKSHARE" to reach Shareware Trade Association and Resources; "GO SPA" to reach the Software Publishers Association). Many individual software publishers, both retail and shareware, also have support forums on CompuServe.

If a CompuServe electronic address is shown in connection with the product, electronic mail can be used to place orders, obtain technical support, etc.

CompuServe also provides the SWREG (Shareware Registration) service, which allows users to order registered copies of products from participating shareware publishers electronically.

The toll-free CompuServe Customer Service phone number for the United States is 1-800-848-8990, should you wish to contact them. The toll-free number for Canada is 1-800-635-6225. From outside the United States and Canada, you can reach CompuServe in the U.S. at 614-457-8650 (not toll-free).

Electronic Address: Delphi

The Delphi information service is a worldwide commercial information service accessible via modem. It provides message forums and download libraries on a variety of topics, as well as full access to Internet and the World-Wide Web.

If a Delphi electronic address is shown in connection with the product, electronic mail can be used to place orders, obtain technical support, etc.

The toll-free Delphi Customer Service phone number for the United States is 1-800-695-4005, should you wish to contact them. From outside the United States and Canada, you can reach Delphi in the U.S. at 617-491-3342 (not toll-free).

Electronic Address: GENie

GENie (General Electric Network for Information Exchange) is a worldwide commercial information service accessible via modem. It provides message forums and download libraries on a variety of topics, as well as full Internet and World-Wide Web access.

If a GENie electronic address is shown in connection with the product, electronic mail can be used to place orders, obtain technical support, etc.

The toll-free GENie Customer Service phone number for the United States and Canada is 1-800-638-9636, should you wish to contact them. From outside the United States and Canada, you can reach GENie in the U.S. at 301-251-6475 (not toll-free).

Electronic Address: Prodigy

Prodigy is a commercial information service accessible via modem throughout the United States and Canada. It provides message forums on a variety of topics, and added download libraries as of 11/95. It also offers Internet and World-Wide Web access.

If a Prodigy electronic address is shown in connection with the product, electronic mail can be used to place orders, obtain technical support, etc.

The toll-free Prodigy Customer Service phone number for the United States and Canada is 1-800-284-5933, should you wish to contact them. They do not offer a non-toll-free number for calls to Customer Service from outside the U.S. and Canada.

Electronic Address: FidoNet

FidoNet is a world-wide network of Bulletin Board Systems. This network and its underlying technology provide automated file transfers, network mail, and a large number of "echomail conferences", each of which allows a public exchange of messages in a specified topic area. Many products, especially those concerned with BBSes themselves, are supported in part via such conferences. Many products also have explicit "product support BBSes" that are connected to this network.

If a FidoNet electronic address is shown in connection with the product, electronic mail ("netmail") can be used to place orders, obtain technical support, etc. You should keep in mind, however, that any messages you send may be readable by the sysops of BBSes along the path traversed by the message. "Crash netmail", in which the calling BBS directly telephones the recipient's BBS, is both faster and more secure, but the message still should not be regarded as private, for most purposes. In particular, transmission of credit card numbers should probably be done only if the user fully understands the details of the message pathway that will be used.

FidoNet node addresses consist of three parts, with a specified punctuation. The parts represent the "zone", the "net", and the "node", in the form

zone:net/node

The "zone" corresponds roughly to continent (North America, Europe, Oceania, Asia, Africa). The "net" corresponds loosely to city, and the "node" is a particular BBS within the net. An example is "1:104/333".

Users may also use FidoNet technology to participate in some of the features of FidoNet without actually running BBSes. Such users are called "points", and they have a FidoNet address that is based on their relationship with a particular node. The format of these addresses is

zone:net/node.point

where the "point" portion is numeric.

FidoNet is highly decentralized in character. Should you desire to obtain detailed information about joining FidoNet, you should find a FidoNet board in your local area, and ask for further information.

Electronic Address: Internet

Internet is an interconnected "network of networks". Taken as a whole, it is the largest and most heavily used computer network in the world. It has grown out of the Arpanet, funded by the U.S. Defense Department's Advanced Research Projects Agency. It was originally intended for use by defense personnel, defense contractors, and researchers in educational institutions. It now has many commercial and hobbyist users as well, and gateways to most of the other major networks and on-line services.

Internet provides electronic mail services, often across these gateways. It also provides many electronic ("Usenet") conferences, and file-transfer capabilities, though these don't always work across the gateways. It even provides the ability to execute programs on remote machines, access to a large number of publicly available libraries, and real-time "chatting" across the network.

Most of these capabilities aren't directly relevant to software, but you'll understand the popularity of Internet a bit better if you're aware of these many attractions.

Internet uses a dynamic, distributed packet-switching technology, with the result that messages between two nodes (and even parts of the same message) may take different paths across intervening machines to reach their destination.

Internet addresses vary widely, but generally have the form

user@node

where either part may be further expanded into multiple, period-separated parts. When the "node" portion is so expanded, the result is called a "Fully Qualified Domain Name". The "node" portion often ends in a "domain" specifier (e.g., the Massachusetts Institute of Technology is "mit.edu", with the domain portion indicating educational institutions). The "node" portion is also sometimes specified in numeric form, such as "192.55.239". In general, Internet addresses should use lower-case characters, to avoid running afoul of compatibility problems enroute.

A good source of additional information about Internet is the document, "Zen and the Art of the Internet", available from many on-line sources, including the [Rams' Island BBS](#).

FTP and World-Wide Web

There are two layers, built on top of the Internet structure, that deserve special mention.

The **File-Transfer Protocol (FTP)** layer allows users to access files from distant sites, given an "address" (a Uniform Resource Locator, or URL). FTP addresses start with the characters "ftp://".

The **World-Wide Web** is a very exciting layer, using the Hypertext Transfer Protocol to provide very easy-to-use graphical access to "websites" worldwide. WWW addresses start with the characters "http://".

Many software publishers (both retail and shareware) have both Web and FTP sites, and these can be a particularly convenient way of obtaining information, downloading products and upgrades, etc. The current VENDINFO standard does not have a special provision for FTP and WWW addresses (the next version will), but publishers typically

provide these addresses in the other electronic addresses field.

Electronic Address: RIME

The Relaynet International Message Exchange (RIME) is a world-wide network of Bulletin Board Systems. Participants pay an annual fee, and purchase the necessary ("Postlink") software from the RIME organization. RIME provides automated file transfers, network mail, and a large number of "echomail conferences", each of which allows a public exchange of messages in a specified topic area. Many products, especially those concerned with BBSes themselves, are supported in part via such conferences. Many products also have explicit "product support BBSes" that are connected to this network.

If a RIME electronic address is shown in connection with the product, electronic mail ("private, routed mail") can be used to place orders, obtain technical support, etc. You should keep in mind, however, that any messages you send may be readable by the sysops of BBSes along the path traversed by the message. In particular, transmission of credit card numbers should probably be done only if the user fully understands the details of the message pathway that will be used.

Every RIME node has both a node name (up to 12 alphanumeric characters) and a node number (currently up to 4 digits). Either of these can be used as a node address. The use of the node number is slightly more reliable, since successful communication by node number is possible even without access to a node-name table that includes the node in question. We've been told that some nodes don't even have this table. On the other hand, the node names are usually meaningful, and may be easier to remember and use reliably.

RIME is a highly centralized network, in which all communication ultimately depends on a centralized exchange point. Nonetheless, if you're interested in obtaining further information about RIME, the standard instructions are to find a local RIME board and ask there.



Other Distributors of Registered Version

This section of the VENDINFO file is displayed by selecting the View Distributors command from the menu, the Distributors tab, or the Distributors speedbutton on the toolbar. This section is optional. When present, it allows the publisher to list other sources from which you can obtain the registered version of the product, and perhaps other related products and services, as well. These sources are in addition to the publisher's main ordering site.

These sources fall into two categories, either or both of which may be relevant to your needs:

Regional distributors, from whom you can order the product (and perhaps obtain technical support, etc.) in a specified geographical area.

Worldwide distributors who provide special services for user convenience.

Examples of such services include taking credit cards (if the author/publisher does not do so directly), rapid on-line registration, and the ability to register products from multiple publishers through a single source.

Contact information includes **mailing address** and **telephone numbers**. This information should be self-explanatory. A future version will probably include electronic addresses, as well.

If information is included about **credit cards** and **acceptable forms of payment**, the information takes the same form as that discussed under Orders.



Technical Support Contact Information

This section of the VENDINFO file is displayed by selecting the View Support command from the menu, the Support tab, or the Support speedbutton on the toolbar. It provides contact information for obtaining technical support for the product. This may or may not be the same as the information listed elsewhere for ordering the product and related services. If the product has regional distributors who are responsible for specific geographical areas, it is possible that customers in those areas will need to obtain support from those distributors. If that is the case, the other distributors display should indicate this requirement.

The support section includes a full set of **mailing address**, **telephone numbers**, and **electronic addresses**. The fields containing normal address and telephone number information should be self-explanatory. Separate help information is provided for each of the electronic address fields.

The **technical support forum** field allows the author/publisher to specify electronic forums which are monitored for the purpose of providing technical support. Sample contents might be:

CompuServe SHAREWARE (section 0), UKSHARE (section 7);

FidoNet ASP, SHAREWARE;

RIME ASP, SHAREWARE



"Read-Me" Section of Front Text

This section of the VENDINFO file is displayed by selecting the View Read-Me command from the menu, the Read-Me tab, or the Read-Me speedbutton on the toolbar. It contains "Read-Me" information provided by the publisher.

This is a substitute for the older READ_ME.1ST and similar files, and it is generally the first thing a user should look at when preparing to install or use the product. It may also provide additional information that will help you decide whether or not to obtain a copy of the product, if you have only the VENDINFO file.



Packing-List Section of Front Text

This section of the VENDINFO file is displayed by selecting the View Packing command from the menu, the Packing List tab, or the Packing List speedbutton on the toolbar. It contains an automatically generated packing list of the exact contents of the package as originally distributed by the author (except that the VENDINFO.DIZ file itself is not included in the list).

The compressed (ZIP or similar) file, or the diskette, by which you received the package should contain exactly these files if it has not been altered since its release by the author. You don't need to verify this manually. If you have unpacked the entire ZIP file into a single directory and invoked VendView on it, the Test Authenticity command will perform the test for you automatically, verifying file names, date/time stamps, sizes, and CRC values.

Once you have performed the product's installation procedure, these files may change, perhaps to a considerable degree. This occurs because installation may unpack and delete compressed files, and installation or execution of the product may result in the creation of new files. This packing list is only intended to allow verification of the integrity of the package, or detection of any changes that have occurred between its release and your receipt of it.



Installation Section of Front Text

This section of the VENDINFO file is displayed by selecting the View Installation command from the menu, the Installation tab, or the Installation speedbutton on the toolbar. If the publisher has provided this section, it should describe the basic Installation procedure, and perhaps a very quick "Quick Start".



Other Author-Provided Sections of Front Text

The author/publisher may have defined additional sections for the front text of the VENDINFO file. If so, they can be viewed, using the View Other command from the menu, the Other tab, or the Other speedbutton on the toolbar



Warranty Section of Front Text

This section of the VENDINFO file is displayed by selecting the View Warranty command from the menu, the Warranty tab, or the Warranty speedbutton on the toolbar. If present in the VENDINFO file, the product warranty describes the legal obligations which the author or publisher accepts when you purchase the product. Most software publishers are good businesspersons, and will bend over backward to help their customers when there's a legitimate need. Nonetheless, for their own legal protection, most write their warranties in a fairly industry-standard way, disclaiming all but the most basic obligations. This is true both for "commercial" software you obtain from retail stores, and for shareware products.

Don't be put off by such a limited warranty. You can probably get reasonable support, if the publisher is a stable business. On the other hand, you should take seriously your own responsibility regarding use of software products. Very likely, no one else in the entire world has exactly the hardware/software environment that you have. The possibility for interactions among the elements of this environment is real, and is the reason that software publishers find it necessary to write such limited warranties. The only real protection you have is to back up your system frequently and well, so that you can recover from the occasional, but inevitable, failures of hardware, software, or fingers. :-)



License Section of Front Text

To view the product's license for distribution and use, select the View License command from the menu, the License tab, or the License speedbutton on the toolbar.

The law gives a product's copyright holder the total right to specify who may use or distribute the product, and under what circumstances. Anyone who uses or distributes a software product in substantial violation of the license requirements is actually breaking the law, in effect stealing from the copyright holder. A common name for this is "software piracy". It costs the software industry hundreds of billions of dollars per year.

Most of us want to be law-abiding, and will honor the license requirements of a software publisher. And it's true that actual legal actions for abuses of license terms, particularly against individuals, are rare. The law takes a serious view of these matters, though, and there are quite substantial civil and criminal penalties for systematic abuse of software copyrights.

It's worth your trouble to pay attention to the rights given you by the copyright holder in this license section. You'll want to know, both because you're an honest citizen and because you don't want to inadvertently exceed the legal rights you've obtained from the publisher.

License for Use of Product

Under most circumstances, the license section will actually contain two separate statements. The License for Use should tell the end user the terms under which the product can be used. For example, a typical use license for a shareware product might indicate that trial use is allowed free for a period of up to 30 days, but that continued use thereafter requires payment of the registration fee. A use license for a registered shareware or retail product might specify whether multiple copies are allowed if you have, say, a desktop and a laptop computer.

License for Distribution of Product

The second portion of the license section is the Distribution License. This statement tells distributors (and even individual users) what conditions they must satisfy in order to be allowed to distribute the product to others. For retail products, this statement will usually forbid any further distribution. For public-domain and freeware products and demonstration programs, this section may allow unlimited distribution.

In the case of shareware products having distribution restrictions, this section will "incorporate by reference" the VENDINFO data record. As an individual user, you should be able to determine, from the text, whether or not you can pass the product on to a friend. Distributors, however, will need to use a different tool than VendView to determine what distribution rights they have, and those rights may vary greatly depending on the proposed distribution medium, the distributor's business practices, charges made to customers, etc. (See [distribution policies](#) for more information.)

If you're interested to know whether or not the package you've received was distributed legally, a very rudimentary test can be performed using the [Test Distribution](#) command.



Opening a VENDINFO File for Viewing

Regardless of whether or not a file is already loaded, selection of File Open (or the Open File speedbutton) allows you to load a VENDINFO file from disk storage. The name of the file currently loaded is always shown on the top line of the screen.

VendView automatically loads the VENDINFO.DIZ file from the current working directory, if such a file is present.

If you maintain a library of VENDINFO files, you will of course need to rename them so their filenames correspond to the products they represent. The help information on renaming VENDINFO files for collections may be useful to you.



Renaming VENDINFO Files for Collections

When keeping a collection of VENDINFO files, it is obviously necessary to rename them so that each has a unique filename. The standard convention for naming the files depends upon your purpose.

If you're keeping VENDINFO files for each package, you'll have to rename the files by package name. Thus, the VENDINFO.DIZ file taken from the package INCXT11A.ZIP will acquire the filename INCXT11A.DIZ.

If you're keeping VENDINFO files representing a collection of products, the convention is to retain only the main VENDINFO.DIZ file (i.e., the one taken from the first package of the product), and to rename it according to the product filename prefix. Thus, the VENDINFO.DIZ file taken from INCXT11A.ZIP becomes INCXT11.DIZ. This is the convention that is used in the VENDINFO Product Registry, for example.



"Demonstrations"

VENDINFO.DOZ files can carry one or more "demonstrations". These are dynamic, scripted, multimedia presentations that may incorporate sound, graphics, and text in an integrated presentation. This can be a very efficient way for the user to become familiar with the principal features of a product.

If you view a VENDINFO.DOZ file that contains such demonstrations, the Demonstration button on the main toolbar will be enabled, and will show the color "animation" image you see above. The View Demos menu command will also be enabled. Selecting either of these will cause the demonstration script to be executed. If the script contains more than one demonstration, you'll first see a menu of their titles, and you'll be given an opportunity to select the one you want to view.

In general, scripts just run automatically at a rate determined by the script author. You can control the presentation to some degree, though, by taking any of these actions:

Press ESC to quit the demo and return to the VendView main window.

Press ENTER to proceed immediately to the next "frame" of the demonstration.

Press the SPACE BAR to pause the demonstration.

Press any other key, or click the left mouse button, to present a window that allows you to select one of these actions. The demonstration will pause until you take an action.

The VENDVIEW.DOZ file that comes with VendView for Windows has several demonstrations, covering the VENDINFO system, the use of VendView, and the capabilities of these scripted demonstrations. The best way to become familiar with VendView's demonstration capability is to load that particular file, and select the Demonstrations button or menu item.



Special Multimedia Content

VENDINFO.DOZ files can carry significant multimedia content, including screenshots, icons, sound samples, a logo, advertising screen, press release, reviewer guidelines, company background, author biography, product features sheet, question-and-answer sheet, and other embedded, compressed files. DOZ files can also carry dynamic demonstrations, but those are discussed in another help topic.

If you're viewing a file that includes any such multimedia contents, the "Specials" button will be enabled, and will display a color picture of its alarm clock. The View Specials menu item will also be enabled. Pressing either of these will display the Specials tab, where you'll see clickable information about the specific multimedia information that's available.

If you haven't disabled the Specials toolbar, it will appear, too:



This probably gives you the clearest and fastest access to the multimedia information. You can display screenshots, icons, etc. by clicking on the appropriate button on this toolbar. If you're in doubt about the meaning of any of the buttons on the toolbar, just move the mouse cursor onto it and leave it there for a second or two. A small "hint" box will appear, showing the meaning of the button.

VendView is capable of displaying several types of included files directly, without calling any other Windows programs. These file types include:

Audio: MID, RMI, WAV

Graphics: PCX, BMP, WMF, ICO, JPG, PNG

In addition, authors may include files of other types, such as TXT, WRI and HLP, with a reasonable expectation that you'll be able to view these using external windows programs. Whenever VendView finds a file type that it can't display directly, it will ask your permission before invoking an external program. This is intended as a safety feature, since a VENDINFO.DOZ file can, in principle, include any file, and the effect of "viewing" one might depend on what application your system lists as associated with the particular file type. If there's no association and the file is not directly executable, VendView will simply quietly fail to display anything.



How to Use VendView for Windows

VendView is a specialized viewer allowing the end-user to see relevant portions of the information in a VENDINFO file.

The Main Toolbar

The main toolbar provides a nice overview of the principal capabilities of VendView.



As you can see, the buttons on the main toolbar are organized in six groups. We'll discuss them by group.

The first "group" has only the

File open button, to load a new VENDINFO file for viewing.

The buttons of the second group display information from the compressed portion of the VENDINFO file. The first two buttons display special content present only in some VENDINFO.DOO files. The buttons of this group display:

Multimedia "demonstrations", which tell you about the product

"Special" multimedia content, such as screenshots, icons, and sound samples

General product information

Platform requirements and recommendations

Prices and registration benefits

Ordering information

Information about regional distributors, if any

Technical support contact information

The third group displays sections of the "front text", which is ordinary ASCII text that can be displayed using an ordinary ASCII viewer. These sections are:

"Read-Me" information

Packing list

Installation instructions

Warranty

License for use and distribution

Other author-provided information

The fourth section contains buttons that invoke various tests, as suggested by the check-marks on the buttons. These capabilities are not yet implemented in the Windows version of VendView, but they will include:

Test authenticity of product package

Test distribution policy of product

Test platform requirements for compatibility with your computer(s)

The fifth section contains buttons for preparing communications with the product's publisher. These capabilities are not yet implemented in the Windows version of VendView, but they will include:

Send orders

Send comments or trouble reports

The last section contains miscellaneous buttons for

Using a fixed-width font

Help

VendView will show you a "hint" that tells what each button is for. While VendView is active, just move the cursor onto a button for a few seconds, and its "hint" will appear. To activate a button, of course, you click on it. If you prefer to use the keyboard to control VendView, you'll find all the same commands in the menus.

Notebook Tabs



The tabs shown across the bottom of the VendView window show you which section of the VENDINFO file is being displayed. Clicking on the tabs will move you from one section to another (this is equivalent to clicking on the corresponding buttons of the main toolbar). For each section, you see a (possibly scrollable) display of information on the selected topic.

The "Specials" Toolbar

When you view a VENDINFO.DOZ file that contains embedded multimedia information, VendView will display the "specials" toolbar.



This toolbar, or the "Specials" tab, gives you access to screenshots, audio samples, icons, logos, and any other such materials contained in the file. This toolbar also provides hints, if you hold the mouse cursor over a button briefly.

Options

The Options menu (from the menu bar) allows you to change several aspects of the VendView display.

One especially important option concerns the directory in which VendView places the

temporary files it creates.



Trade Association Memberships

Author/publisher membership in trade associations may be relevant to users and distributors. This is particularly true for trade associations that hold the author to particular standards of quality or professionalism, such as the ASP.

Trade associations which are specially coded in the current VENDINFO standard (and can therefore be tested by automated tools) are:

Association of Shareware Authors and Distributors (ASAD)

Association of Shareware Professionals (ASP)

Deutschsprachige Shareware Autoren und Haendlervereinigung (DSAH)

Educational Software Cooperative (ESC)

Shareware Trade Association and Resources (STAR)

Software Publisher's Association (SPA)

Additional trade associations may be listed under "Other".



FILE_ID.DIZ Files

Files with the name FILE_ID.DIZ are not VENDINFO files, but may be confused with them because they use the same "DIZ" filename extension. Actually, FILE_ID.DIZ is a (much simpler) predecessor of the VENDINFO idea, and we've adopted the "DIZ", which means "Description In ZIP".

FILE_ID.DIZ files originated with the PCBoard BBS system. They consist simply of a descriptive text that may be up to 10 lines long, and up to 45 characters wide.

You can use VendView to read FILE_ID.DIZ files, so long as they have exactly that name. Any other filename with a "DIZ" extension will be read by VendView as if it's a VENDINFO file, and a failure will occur if it is not.



Describe DOZ Files

These files may be confusable with VENDINFO.DOZ files, because they use the same DOZ filename extension. They are produced by a program called DESCRIBE.EXE, provided by FormGen, Inc. for use in submitting products for the ASP CD-ROM. As a convenience for the user, we've insured that VendView will display most of the information in these files. However, their content is very limited.

Describe's DOZ files can be recognized fairly easily, since they are exactly 2560 bytes in length, and their internal content begins with the characters "DS".

VENDINFO's DOZ files are the method preferred by FormGen for submitting products for their CD-ROM, but there are still quite a few products on the CD that are accompanied by Describe-type files. Particularly if you're accessing DOZ files directly from that CD-ROM, or downloading files from the ASP website or FTP site, you may encounter these files.



Testing Package Authenticity

NOTE: This capability has not yet been implemented in VendView for Windows. If you need this capability, it is already available in VendView for DOS. It will be added to VendView for Windows soon.

Test Authenticity tests the distributed product package to detect any changes in files since the package was released by its author. This function can be selected from the menu, or by clicking on the Test Authenticity speedbutton.

The authenticity test compares the package contents, as originally prepared by the author, with the actual files you've received. Thus, it can be performed only if you have the actual package (rather than just the VENDINFO file), and if you have copied or UNZIPped the files into the current working directory. Note that the files should not be altered further. For example, if there is an installation program with the package, you must run the authenticity test before running the installation program. Once the installation program (or any other alteration) has modified the files, the test will fail.

To perform this test, then, you must have unpacked (but not installed) the files in the package into a single directory, and you must have loaded its included VENDINFO.DIZ file into VendView.

There is one small exception to this test. Many authors use the Software Distribution Network (SDN) to distribute their products to BBSes world-wide. When that system is used, a file called SDN.ID is changed (with the explicit permission of the author) in the process of distributing the package. To avoid incorrectly reporting such packages as illegally changed, VendView ignores changes to SDN.ID.

It should be noted that VENDINFO allows authenticity testing only for one distribution package at a time. If a product is so large that it is distributed in multiple ZIP files, or on multiple diskettes, each of these ZIP files or diskettes is a separate package, and must be tested independently. The test compares the actual files in the package against the VENDINFO Packing List for the package.



Testing for Legal Distribution

NOTE: This capability has not yet been implemented in VendView for Windows. If you need this capability, it is already available in VendView for DOS. It will be added to VendView for Windows soon.

VendView allows you to perform a partial test to determine whether or not the product copy you've received was distributed legally (i.e., in accordance with the product's distribution license).

This is a "partial" test because the distribution policies that an author might adopt are numerous and somewhat complex, and VendView cannot determine whether or not all conditions have been satisfied in all cases. For example, if the author requires written permission before a particular type of distributor distributes the product via a particular channel, VendView cannot in general determine whether or not such permission has been given.

This distribution policy test is independent of the VendView test for package authenticity. That test, invoked by the Test Authenticity command, determines whether or not the package has been modified, and reports any obvious violation of the author's repackaging policy. Both tests must be satisfied for the distribution to be entirely "kosher".



Sending Orders

NOTE: This capability has not yet been implemented in VendView for Windows.

A recent extension to the VENDINFO standard will soon allow VendView to generate orders for software products directly from:

Ordering contact information in the VENDINFO file

Price/benefit information in the VENDINFO file

Contact information for the user, which is entered once via the Options User command, and can then be used repeatedly. This provides the publisher's order department with all the information needed to send you the product or to contact you if there are questions.

VendView will enable this capability only in those cases in which the publisher has indicated -- via a flag in the VENDINFO file -- that such orders are acceptable. If the ordering of a product requires product choices or user information that can't be anticipated by VendView, then this is an inappropriate mechanism for placing orders. For most common situations, though, this mechanism will suffice, and we anticipate that publishers will choose to enable this feature.

For products that use this feature, preparing an order -- ready to mail, fax, or e-mail -- will be a really simple process for the user. Furthermore, it will be possible to order products solely from the VENDINFO file, in situations in which that is appropriate, without downloading complete evaluation or demonstration versions of the product first.

As more and more VENDINFO files are made available via World-Wide Web sites, product-support BBSes and forums, CD-ROMs, and the VENDINFO Product Registry, there should be many situations in which this results in increased convenience for the user, and increased marketing opportunities for publishers.



Sending Comments or Trouble Reports

NOTE: This capability has not yet been implemented in VendView for Windows.

VendView can be a great convenience when you want to send comments or trouble reports to the publisher's technical support department. Our intent is to use four sources of information to assist you with this task:

Product and version details taken from the VENDINFO file.

Technical support contact information taken from the VENDINFO file.

Contact information for the user, which is entered once via the Options User command, and can then be used repeatedly. This provides the publisher's order department with all the information needed to send you the product or to contact you if there are questions.

System configuration information, if you wish to include it, which will be automatically collected from your system by VendView.

Almost at the push of a button, you should be able to prepare an unusually complete support request, ready to be mailed, faxed, or e-mailed. Watch for this feature in a future version of VendView for Windows.



Distribution Policies

The VENDINFO system is intended to be useful from the viewpoint of publishers, users, sysops, disk vendors, and all the other folks involved in the generation, distribution, and use of software.

From the point of view of the user, the main functions of VENDINFO are to convey product information and to provide package integrity checking.

From the viewpoint of authors and distributors, an important additional purpose is to convey legally binding distribution policies from author to distributor. This is relevant mainly for products intended for electronic distribution, such as shareware, freeware, and demonstration programs. Retail and registered-shareware products typically have distribution licenses that forbid further distribution. Even in these cases, VENDINFO can help distributors, by preventing inadvertent distribution of such products.

This section of the help text is provided for those users who are interested in understanding distribution policies better.

Copyright Basics

No one is entitled to make any changes to a copyrighted product, or to distribute that product, unless the copyright holder allows them to do so. To provide a bit more detail:

Copyright law prevents anyone from distributing or modifying a copyrighted product without the copyright holder's permission

The product's distribution license specifies the terms under which that permission is conveyed.

By the way, under the Berne Copyright Convention, software is automatically copyrighted, even if no formal copyright notice is present. The *only* way a product can enter the public domain (i.e., become public property) is if the copyright holder explicitly declares it so.

Distribution Licenses in VENDINFO Files

When a product includes a VENDINFO file, its distribution license incorporates by reference the distribution-policy information contained in the compressed data portion of the VENDINFO file.

Because there is a provision for a fair amount of detail there, the author has a good deal of control over how, and by whom, the product is distributed.

For the most part, authors use this to insure such things as these:

The product package is changed, if at all, only in ways that the author allows. Packages are often (illegally) changed in ways that disrupt installation procedures, reduce registrations, etc. Yet most authors wish to allow some changes, if only recompression with a different compression program. The VENDINFO file makes the allowed changes quite explicit, and allows at least some verification by automated tools.

The product is distributed only via distribution channels that are appropriate to the product and acceptable to the author.

The product is distributed only by those whose business practices are satisfactory to the author. Distributors who fail to make it clear that products are shareware, or that separate payment to the author is required for continued use, do damage to both authors and users.

Users are not charged distribution fees, by the distributor, that are so large that the user will feel he has already paid for the product, and will be disinclined to pay the registration fee even if the product is found useful. We must all keep in mind, however, that such distributors are providing a useful service in their own right, and deserve to recover their costs and make a reasonable profit.

Incidentally, most authors allow their shareware products to be passed on, by individual users, to their friends and colleagues, so long as no fee is charged. This policy, if it applies, will be expressed in the text portion of the license, where you can read it easily. The encoded distribution information is intended for distributors.

Package Modifications

The VENDINFO file allows the author to control modifications to the distribution package in a number of ways. Modifications may be forbidden altogether, or restricted to: addition of files, addition of Help or GO.BAT files, addition of advertisements, addition or modification of installation procedures, and/or changes in the compression envelope.

VENDINFO tools can determine whether or not the files in the package have been changed, and VendView will display the results of such a test if you invoke the Test Authenticity command. If changes have been made that clearly violate the product's distribution policy, that will be reported, as well. If file modification is allowed, however, such automated tests cannot easily determine whether or not the changes violate the policy.

Contact and Prohibit Dates

On a channel-by-channel basis, the author can specify two dates that affect the distributor's actions. The contact date is a mechanism for insuring that only the most recent version is distributed. If a distribution is to begin after the specified contact date, the distributor is required to contact the author/publisher for the latest version. This is done by channel, since for some distribution channels (e.g., a magazine cover disk or a CD-ROM), it is especially important that the most recent version be used.

The author may also specify a prohibit date, after which distribution of this version is prohibited. These dates, too, are on a channel-by-channel basis.

Distribution Permissions

For shareware products with distribution restrictions (most shareware products are in this category) the VENDINFO data record contains detailed statements of distribution policy for each of the following 13 distribution channels:

Distribution to End User by BBS
Distribution to BBSes by File-Distribution Network
Distribution to End User by Mail-Order Disk Vendor
Distribution to End User by CD-ROM or Similar Mass Medium
Distribution to End User by Single-Site Retail Rack or Similar
Distribution to Seller by Rackware Distributor
Distribution to End User in Book Enclosure Diskette
Distribution to End User by Subscription Service
Distribution to End User by Magazine "Cover" Disk
Distribution to End User by TV/cable/satellite Broadcast
Distribution to End User by 1-900-Type Phone Service
Product Installation by Distributor on End User's Machine
Distribution by Substantially Different Means (Other)

For each of these channels, the author may prohibit distribution, or may allow it. If distribution is allowed, the author may then break the distributors down into those who "qualify" and those who "do not qualify", based on business practices, product packaging, trade association membership, prices charged, and various other factors. Then the author specifies the rights of both the qualifying and non-qualifying groups.

Here are three examples, illustrating the three general patterns that this "qualifier/non-qualifier" approach allows:

A preferred class of distributors may distribute the product without any further contact or permission, while others may distribute only if they first obtain written permission.

Example: all ASP Vendor Members qualify; qualifiers may distribute without permission; all others require permission.

Only certain distributors may distribute the product at all, but they require no further contact or permission.

Example: all distributors who "fully inform" their customers qualify; qualifiers may distribute without permission; others may not distribute.

Written permission is always required, though the qualifying set can include everybody or just selected distributor types.

Example: all distributors qualify; qualifiers must always have written permission.

Full Disclosure of Shareware Principles

"Full disclosure", by the way, means that the distributors agree to tell their customers these things:

The product is shareware.

The nature of shareware.

The distributor claims no ownership rights in the product.

Separate payment to the author is required if the product is used other than for the author-specified evaluation period.

Testing for Legal Distribution

For the convenience of the concerned user, VendView can perform limited distribution-policy testing using the Test Distribution command.

Viewing Files in the Package

NOTE: This capability has not yet been implemented in VendView for Windows. If you need this capability, it is already available in VendView for DOS. It will be added to VendView for Windows soon.

When you unpack a complete package that includes a VENDINFO file, VendView has access to all the other files in the package while you're viewing the VENDINFO file. As a convenience for the user, we intend to allow you to view these other files from within VendView. We've done that already in our VendView for DOS program, but we haven't yet implemented it in the Windows version.

Watch for this feature in a future version of VendView for Windows.



Testing for Platform Compatibility

NOTE: This capability has not yet been implemented in VendView for Windows.

We intend to add platform compatibility testing to VendView for Windows. This will allow you to describe one or more computer configurations once (see [Options Platform](#)), perhaps with some automated configuration detection assistance for the computer on which you're running VendView.

Then, with the push of a button, VendView will be able to compare your configuration(s) against the platform requirements and recommendations of each product whose VENDINFO file you view. VendView will report any clear incompatibilities or compability questions, so you can verify your ability to use a product very easily, perhaps without downloading the actual product.

Watch for this feature in a future version of VendView.

Options: Configuring VendView

The Options menu allows you to

Display or hide toolbars and tabs

Change the format in which dates are displayed

Change the decimal-point character used in displaying prices

Change the display to a fixed-width font

Specify the directory in which VendView creates temporary files

Enter your personal information, if desired

Enter your platform information, if desired.

Options: Displaying or Hiding Toolbars and Tabs

VendView provides several ways for you to select the main VendView commands or to view the different sections of a VENDINFO file. The **menu bar** is always displayed, and it gives you access to all the capabilities of VendView.



The **main toolbar**, shown above, provides quicker, "speedbutton" access to VendView's major or most commonly used capabilities. The display of this toolbar can be toggled on and off by selecting the Toolbar command from the Options menu.



The **notebook tabs** at the bottom of the display allow you to quickly move among sections of the VENDINFO file, and provide a visual indication of the currently-selected section. The tabs display can be toggled on and off by selecting the Notebook Tabs command from the Options menu.



When you're viewing a VENDINFO DOZ file that includes special multimedia content, such as screenshots, a second, "**Specials**" toolbar can be displayed to provide a visual indication of the available special content, and to allow rapid selection of these contents. The display of this toolbar can be toggled on and off by selecting the Enable Specials Toolbar command from the Options menu. This toolbar does not appear if no multimedia content is present, regardless of the Options setting.

Options: Changing the Date Format

You may control the form in which dates are displayed by VendEdit. To do this, simply enter, into the Date display format field, a string representing the format you prefer. You may specify different orders of the month, day, and year portions, and you may use almost any delimiter you like to separate them. Here are some examples:

Format	Result
mm/dd/yy	01/02/00
m/dd/YY	1/02/1900
dd-mm-YY	02-01-1900
dd-MMM-yyyy	02-Jan-1900
d-MMM-yyyy	2-JAN-1900

NOTE: Date formats within the text portion of the VENDINFO file are not under your control. Changing this value will affect those dates that are produced by VendView, however.

Options: Changing the Decimal-Point Character

The default decimal-point character used to display price information is a "period" symbol, as used in the U.S. A different character can be specified using the Options Decimal command.

Options: Fixed Font

The Packing List section is best viewed using a fixed-width font, since it contains a table that depends on correctly aligned columns. Occasionally, other front-text sections (frequently, the "Read-Me" section) may need a fixed font, as well.

When you view the Packing List, VendView automatically uses a fixed font. When viewing other sections of the VENDINFO file, you can toggle between fixed and proportional fonts using the Options Fixed command or the Fixed Font button on the main toolbar.

Options: Changing the Temporary-Files Directory

VendView creates a number of temporary files during its operation, deleting them when it's finished. By default, VendView will use the directory you've defined in the TEMP or TMP variable of your DOS environment. You can specify any directory, though, using the Options Directory command.

The names of the temporary files are partly determined by the author of the individual VENDINFO file that's being viewed. Name conflicts are unlikely even if the temporary-files directory is shared with other applications. To be totally safe, though, you might want to create a temporary-files directory that's used only by VendView.

Options: Entering User Information

NOTE: This capability has not yet been implemented in VendView for Windows.

When implemented, this command will allow you to enter your name, address, phone number(s), e-mail address(es), etc. That information will be used when you make use of the Send Orders or Send Comments commands.

Options: Entering Platform Information

NOTE: This capability has not yet been implemented in VendView for Windows.

When implemented, this command will allow you to enter information about one or more computer platforms, including details of hardware, operating system, and peripherals. That information will be used when you make use of the Send Comments or Test Platform commands.

