

VbReader
User's Manual

Version 1.50

Shareware by:
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Distributed by:
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Free Support BBS
Modem (416) 283-7157

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1.0 Introduction

VbReader is an off-line reader program which runs under Microsoft Windows 3.1. It allows you to manage your electronic mail from Bulletin Boards whose mail packets conform to the Quick Mail format. **VbReader** incorporates the features needed to unpack mail packets, read the messages, write replies and generate a mail packet containing the replies.

The benefits of using **VbReader** are:

- easy to use, fast and reliable
- low registration price, no upgrade charges
- written in Visual Basic and C to provide the most modern user interface possible
- takes complete advantage of the Microsoft Windows 3.1 environment and capabilities
- user configurable
- full font capability which makes it suitable for many languages
- handles up to 10,000 conferences
- large replies up to 30K bytes are automatically broken up into individual messages
- query capability allows searches of key words in titles or mail text
- built in ANSI viewer
- ability to add or delete conferences within the program

Users of this program will require a communication program to perform the download and upload of mail packets to the bulletin board of their choice.

1.1 VbReader Support

VbReader is being marketed as Shareware and program registration is required after a trial usage. The full capabilities of the program are in the unregistered package so the potential customer can test **VbReader** completely on their system.

The author intends to actively support development of **VbReader**. Comments and suggestions are encouraged; users can send Email to him via USENET at:

daniel.page@canrem.com

or on NANET (NorthAmericaNET) from Canada Remote Systems BBS as user:

DANIEL PAGE

The author can also be reached on the RIME and INET Windows conferences.

VbReader is being distributed by Dirac Systems and will be supported by the author on Dirac Systems' BBS at modem (416)283-7157. Users can download the latest version of the program or upload trouble reports and messages at no cost.

1.2 Registration

Registration is easy. You register **VbReader** by sending in CAN\$25.00 to the address below. You then receive your own serial number and key by mail which you put into the version of **VbReader** that you are using by running **Quick Configuration | Registration** from the menu.

The registration key requires the BBS user name you use in the VbReader **Quick Configuration | Tag Line** menu for **Your Name**. Please use the order form, **ORDERFRM.WRI**, which is in WRITE format and can be printed out from Windows.

You can register by charging to your **VISA** or **MasterCard** account; please use the order form that accompanies the distribution files. Province of Ontario customers need to include the additional Provincial Sales Tax (PST). If you require a copy of the software, please include CAN\$10.00 plus PST. Send your registration to:

Dirac Systems
Attn: VbReader
P.O. Box 476
West Hill, Ontario
Canada M1E 4Y9

There are no upgrade fees for **VbReader**.

2.0 Red Tape

VbReader is being marketed as Shareware. You are able to try out the full capabilities of the program. After a short trial period you will have had the opportunity to evaluate the compatibility of the software with your system and whether you wish to continue

using it. You will then be expected to purchase a registered copy.

2.1 Disclaimer of Warranty

This software and documentation are provided 'as is' and without warranties as to performance of merchantability or any other warranties whether expressed or implied. Because of the various hardware and software environments into which these programs may be put, no warranty of fitness for a particular purpose is offered.

Good data processing procedure dictates that any program be thoroughly tested with non-critical data before relying on it. The user must assume the entire risk of using the program. Any liability of the seller will be limited exclusively to product replacement or refund of purchase price.

2.2 Copyright Notice

VbReader is Copyright (c) 1992-1993 by Daniel Page. Dirac Systems is acting solely as a distribution agent and claims no ownership, copyright, liability, or maintenance of **VbReader**.

2.3 Distribution Kits

The major means of distribution of **VbReader** is by the BBS networks. You will download a compressed package called either **VBREnnnL.ZIP** or **VBREnnnS.ZIP**, where **nnn** is the version number multiplied by 10 (for example, version 1.50 would have **nnn** = 150). **VBREnnnL.ZIP** (Large kit) contains all the files required to run **VbReader**; in particular, it includes VBRUN200.DLL and a file with a larger number of taglines. Otherwise, **VBREnnnS.ZIP** (Small kit) is missing VBRUN200.DLL and has a file with a smaller number of taglines.

The kits may be distributed on Bulletin Boards, diskettes, etc. provided they are kept intact.

The distribution kits contain the following files (except as noted above):

READER.EXE: Main **VbReader** Program

VBANSI.EXE: ANSI viewer for Microsoft Windows

VBRUN200.DLL: Microsoft Visual Basic 2.00 Dynamic Link Library

VBREADER.DLL: **VbReader** Custom Dynamic Link Library

SETUP.EXE: Setup program to install **VbReader**

VBRSETUP.EXE: Custom setup

SETUP.LST: List of files for SETUP.EXE to install

SETUPKIT.DLL: Setup program Dynamic Link Library

VER.DLL: Windows version control Dynamic Link Library

CMDIALOG.VBX Microsoft Visual Basic common dialog extension
THREED.VBX: Microsoft Visual Basic 3D Controls extensions
EXPLODE.PIF: PIF file to launch PKUNZIP.EXE
COMPRESS.PIF: PIF file to launch PKZIP.EXE
8514OEM.FON: Large terminal font
8514FIX.FON: Large fixed pitch font
VGAOEM.FON: Small terminal font
VGAFIX.FON: Small fixed pitch font
README.WRI: Read this new information first in Microsoft Write format
VBREADER.WRI: This documentation in Microsoft Write format
ORDERFRM.WRI: Order form for registration

Additional sample files:

FILES.PIF: PIF file used to launch the files display editor
TAGFILE.TXT: Text file containing taglines

2.4 Upgrade Policy

In order to provide our customers with advances in performance and convenience there will be new versions of **VbReader** from time to time. Maintenance releases will increase the version number in the hundredth's digit of the version number, for example, 3.10 to 3.11; this is a minor release which will fix small problems. Product improvement releases will increase the version number in the tenth's digit of the version number, for example, 3.11 to 3.20; this is also a minor release. Major product changes will require increases in the version number, for example, 2.11 to 3.00; this would mean a significant functionality change. Changes are not whimsical; they are the result of customer input leading to careful development and testing. A number of fixes or improvements constitute a change so that releases are not too frequent. Releases that are referred to as minor will, in fact, provide some more substantial abilities or improvements.

Minor revisions will normally have no cost increase; there may be cost changes due to circumstances beyond our control, as in changes to taxes, mail rates or inflationary pressures. Since prices are subject to change, please refer to the latest Shareware release or Dirac Systems to determine the present upgrade rates; incorrect upgrade or registration orders cannot be processed. The upgrade policy and price is guaranteed for 1993.

Registered users of any **VbReader** version can transfer their registration key and serial number to subsequent versions. When a Shareware upgrade of the software appears, registered users are free to use it regardless of its functional change.

A new copy of the latest versions will be sent to registered users if they require one. The

cost is CAN\$10.00 to cover postage and handling. Province of Ontario residents must add the Provincial Sales Tax (PST) but not the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

2.5 Hardware and Software Requirements

VbReader requires the following:

- Although **VbReader** will run on an Intel based 286 personal computer, a 386 is preferred.
- VGA or better video monitor; 800x600 resolution is preferred.
- Microsoft Windows 3.1.
- A telecommunications program to download mail packets and to upload replies.
- PKZIP and PKUNZIP software to compress and expand mail packets.

2.6 Definition of Terms

CRS: Canada Remote Systems.

DOS: Disk Operating System.

ENTER: The Enter key.

IBM: Registered trademark of International Business Machines Corporation.

INSERT: The Insert key.

Microsoft Windows: Registered trademark of Microsoft Corporation.

MS DOS: Registered trademark of Microsoft Corporation.

PgDn: Page Down key.

PgUp: Page Up key.

SPACE: The Space bar.

3.0 Installation

This Section describes the installation of **VbReader**. This is normally a one time event and care should be taken to do it correctly. You have to install the files on your disk drive and then configure **VbReader** to your liking.

3.1 Installation from Windows

You should unzip the distribution file, **VBREnnnL.ZIP** or **VBREnnnS.ZIP**, in a temporary directory or a diskette. Start Windows File Manager and then run the **SETUP.EXE** in the distribution kit by double clicking on it. This will create the **VBREADER** directory, copy the correct files to it, install the DLLs to the Windows directory and create a Program Group called **VbReader**. **VbReader** will be a Program Item in the group. The setup program will also launch the Windows font manager to prompt you to install the required fonts.

3.2 Font Installation

During the installation, the font manager is launched. Choose the directory or diskette where you have the distribution files. Four fonts will appear in the list. They are:

Terminal font for the IBM 8514
Fixed pitched font for the IBM 8514
Terminal [US] [Set #6]
Fixed pitched font for VGA screens

Click on the **Select All** button to select them, then click the **OK** button. The fonts will be installed. If the fonts are already installed in your system, Windows will display a message to that effect; just click **OK** until all fonts are installed.

In order to function properly, VbReader requires that ALL fonts be installed.

3.3 The Archive Programs: PKZIP/PKUNZIP

VbReader uses the programs, PKZIP.EXE and PKUNZIP.EXE, to compress and expand messages. **VbReader** was designed to use version 2.04G of PKWare's zip utilities. The archiver is invoked directly through a **PIF** file, with **VbReader** passing the appropriate parameters. If PKZIP is on your Path, no changes to the PIF files are necessary. If PKZIP is NOT on your Path, use the Windows PIF editor in the Main Windows Group to edit the command line in the Pif files to point to the directory where PKZIP is located.

VbReader can use version 1.10 of the zip utilities with a small configuration change.

3.4 Initial Start Up of VbReader

To start **VbReader**, you may double-click on **READER.EXE** with the Windows File Manager, or double click on the **VbReader** icon in the Program Group.

3.5 Initial Configuration

When **VbReader** is first started, it will look for a configuration file, **VBREADER.INI**, in order to set up directories and user preferences. Initially, this file will not exist. The program will then invoke the configuration menu. The following options should be verified and adjusted to your needs.

3.5.1 Paths and Directories

Examine the directories listed. The defaults provided should be adequate. If you have specific upload and download directories for your communication program, you should change the uploads and download paths to those directories so that **VbReader** will be

able to access mail packets directly from the communication program's directories.

The Replies directory and the upload directory must be different.

Once you have configured the options, click the **Done** button. **VbReader** will proceed to create the required directories listed in the configuration menu. The program will notify you for every directory created; just click the **OK** button to accept each one. The mail screen is then displayed.

You must now open the configuration menu, Quick Configuration.

4.0 Quick Configuration Menu

Click on the **Quick Configuration** menu item. There are a number of options you can choose from:

Screen Options...

Select your screen set up preferences.

Paths...

Set up your various paths for file directories.

Packers and Door Commands...

Set up your archiver software and mail door type.

User Info...

Provide basic user information that can be used in your messages.

Editor Selections...

Choose the various editors you want to use.

FidoNet Mode...

FidoNet requires a special set up for replies.

Registration

Enter your serial number and key after paying for registration of **VbReader**.

The first option listed under the **Quick Configuration** menu is **Screen Options**. Select this option.

4.1.1 Screen Options Choice

VbReader allows you to configure your reader screens according to your preferences. Choose the style you find most pleasing; you can always change it to something else

later on.

4.1.1.1 Font Name, Size and Style

The **Font Name** list box allows you to choose the fonts that will be used in the main view screen, as well as your personal signature text box. Clicking on the button on the right side of the box will display the font names installed in your system. Click on the font you wish to use to read and write messages.

You can also alter the appearance of the font by clicking the **Font Style** radio buttons to make the font **Bold** or **Normal**. In addition, the Font Size text box allows you to select the size of the font.

As you select a new font or modify a font characteristic, the text box at the bottom right of the menu screen will display the result. Choose the font and font style which most appeals to you.

It is recommended that you choose either the **Terminal** font or **8514OEM** font, depending on your screen resolution. **Terminal** font is smaller and is intended for VGA screens while **8514OEM** is intended for Super VGA screens. In addition, these two fonts will allow the display of IBM specific characters such as "happy faces" and so on which are often used on BBS networks. They are fixed pitch fonts which is what a standard DOS screen uses; this retains the spatial characteristics of message text. On the other hand, they are not resizable. For **Terminal** you should pick 9 points for the font size. For **8514OEM** you should pick 13.5 points for the font size.

VbReader will allow you to use True Type fonts which provide a wider range of sizes and typefaces. However, they cannot display the IBM specific character set. The text will remain intact but the any IBM graphic characters will be converted to an underscore '_' or some other approximation.

4.1.1.2 Screen Colors

You can choose the foreground and background colors used in the main reader screen by clicking on the desired colored boxes in the two frames at the bottom left of the menu screen. You can apply the colors to either the **View Screen** or the **List Header**.

The **View Screen** is screen where you view the message text or a list of messages. The **List Header** is located at the top of a list of messages; it merely describes the message list as: **SUBJECT**, **MSGNUM:**, **FROM:**, and **TO:**.

The color result is displayed in the sample text box.

4.1.1.3 Opening Size

This option determines if **VbReader** will open in full screen mode or in normal mode when it is invoked. The default is normal mode.

4.1.1.4 Line Length

This option determines where a line wrap will occur when a reply or new message is entered. While you type a message, the lines will wrap when the text reaches the right edge of the edit screen. However, because the fonts used and their sizes can be selected by the user, this wrap may not be at a desirable location. The line may be too long or too short. For this reason, the final line wraps are inserted by the message processing algorithms when a message is saved. This field determines at what character the wrap occurs. The default number of 76 is recommended.

4.1.1.5 Message Length

The option, **Msg Length**, allows you to set the normal length of a message. The default is 99 lines. Your messages may be as large as 30K but **VbReader** will automatically break messages into continued messages if a message is longer than the message length that you specify.

4.1.1.6 Quote Width

When the text of a message is inserted in a reply, this field determines at what character position the quoted text will be truncated or wrapped. This field should always be equal or smaller than the chosen Line Length. When this field is smaller than the Line Length, the resulting text will be centered in the edit screen.

4.1.1.7 Quote Mode

When you reply to a mail message you will often want to include the original message to refer to its content. When inserting quoted text in a reply, this option will determine whether quoted lines that exceed the Quote Width should be truncated or wrapped to a new line.

Generally the Truncate option with a Quote Width of 76 results in text that is better formatted. The wrap option works better if the Quote Width is around 40 characters.

4.1.2 Paths Choice

The second option listed in the **Quick Configuration** menu item is the **Paths Choice**. Your normal paths, which must be fully qualified, are determined on the initial set up; however, you may change them at any time. You are able to set up or change your default paths for:

Work Directory

This is where **VbReader** expands the message packets.

Downloads

This is where your communication program downloads the mail packets to.

Uploads

This is where your communication program uploads the mail packets from.

Archives

If you save messages as files they will be kept in this directory. See **File | Save Message as Text**.

Replies

This is where your replies are kept until creating a reply packet which is complete and ready for uploading. See **File | Create Replies Packet**.

Datafiles

This is where your Tag Lines file, Twit list file, etc. are kept.

4.1.3 Packers and Door Commands Choice

The third option listed in the **Quick Configuration** menu item is the **Packer and Door Commands**. Use these to change your archiver commands and mail door type.

Archiver Unpack Command:

You are provided with a PIF file, EXPLODE.PIF, to use a DOS based archiver to unpack messages. The command, such as **C:\VBREADER\EXPLODE.PIF -)**, is used to point to the PIF file. The command line argument, **-)**, is recommended for PKZIP204G. Make sure that the full path is specified.

Archiver Pack Command:

You are provided with a PIF file, COMPRESS.PIF, to use a DOS based archiver to pack messages. The command, such as **C:\VBREADER\COMPRESS.PIF -)**, is used to point to the PIF file. The command line argument, **-)**, is recommended for PKZIP204G. Make sure that the full path is specified.

Archiver Move Switch:

Sometimes your archiver program requires a command line switch for some purpose in your system. Put or change the switch here. The move switch, **-m-**, causes the archiver to delete your replies during the packing process. Version 1.10 of PKZIP used the switch,

-m.

Mail Door Type:

There are a number of mail formats that you can configure. One of the most popular is QMAIL but you can also have a choice of:

QMAIL
MARKMAIL
ROSEMAIL
KMAIL
CMPMAIL

4.1.4 User Info Choice

The fourth option listed in the **Quick Configuration** menu item is the **Tag Line** menu. Clicking on this option will invoke the second configuration menu. This menu allows you to modify the following options:

4.1.4.1 Your Name

This option sets your user name. This is used when entering replies or new messages.

This field is **critical** for two reasons. An error in this will prevent the mail door at the BBS from accepting your replies; your reply name and BBS name must agree. Also, this field is used in the verification of your registration key.

4.1.4.2 Your Tag Line

This is your default tagline.

4.1.4.3 Tag File Name

This is the name of a file containing taglines. This file must reside in the directory listed in the first configuration menu; normally this is located in the **DATAFILE** sub directory of **VBREADER**. **VbReader** comes with a public domain file containing 4500 taglines in the large kit and a few dozen in the small kit; you can substitute your own too. By default, the file name is **TAGFILE.TXT**; it is an ASCII text file with one tagline per line. You may change this to any name you wish. Just make sure that you tell **VbReader** the correct location and name of the tag file, via the configuration menus.

Because of memory usage limitations, **VbReader** is limited to using only the first 1000 entries in the tagline file.

4.1.4.4 Your Signature Lines

This text box contains the signature text which will be appended to the end of the messages you write. The font used in this text box is the same as the main read screen font. Should you wish to make "boxes" or other patterns, make sure that you use a fixed pitch font to preserve the required spacing. Three such fonts are available: **Terminal**, **8514OEM**, and **Fixedsys**. Once your pattern has been entered, you may revert to any desired font. Your pattern spatial characteristics will be distorted, but when your message is read by the recipient, it will be correct, as most other off-line readers use fixed pitch fonts.

4.1.4.5 Default BBS

Finally, this box allows you to specify a default BBS name. Once you have read a mail packet, this field will contain the BBS identity code of that BBS.

After having set those options, click **Done** and **VbReader** returns you to the main screen.

4.1.5 Editor Selections Choice

Now select the fifth item in the **Quick Configuration** menu, **Editor Selections**. The following options are displayed:

4.1.5.1 Files List Editor

This option allows you to select the editor which will be used to display the new files list downloaded from the BBS. The default is the **WRITE.EXE** program that is shipped with Windows (Accessories Program Group). You may specify your favorite editor if you wish. If this editor is a Windows based editor, you need only specify the program name. If the editor is not in your path, you must include the full path. For example:

DESKEDIT.EXE

or

C:\EDITOR\DESKEDIT.EXE

If the editor is a DOS application, it is best to insert the name of a PIF file which will supply the required parameters to Windows in order to launch the editor. Normally, this PIF file will contain the name of the editor and will launch the editor in Windowed mode. See the example PIF file provided, **FILES.PIF**.

4.1.5.2 Services Editor

This editor selection is used to display the services data files downloaded from the BBS. See the **Files List Editor** selection above for details in configuring this option.

Services are not supported in this version of VbReader. Should a service packet be received, you will be able to see a listing of it's contents via the View Items menu. In order to see the contents you will have to use an external program.

Now return to the main **Quick Configuration** menu.

4.1.5.3 News, Bulletins, ANSI Viewer

As above, enter the editors you want to view the BBS News, Bulletin, or other ANSI files. **VbReader** comes with its own viewer, **VBANSI.EXE**, and will be the default editor. The ANSI viewer will allow you to see the colorful ANSI graphics that are popular on a BBS today.

4.1.6 FidoNet Mode Choice

The sixth item in the **Quick Configuration** menu is Fido Mode. This option changes the tear line characters to a string of character which FIDO BBS systems will allow. When this option is OFF (unchecked) the reader is PC Board mode, the normal mode.

4.1.7 Mode Français Choice

This mode will change the quote line used when replying to a message. When it is checked, the quote line is in French. To change the Keyboard to French mode, use the Windows Control Panel, International option. Invoking this option will automatically launch the Control Panel, International option. You must then pick the language and keyboard of your choice.

4.1.8 Registration Choice

When you register your Shareware version of **VbReader**, you will be sent a special registration key and serial number which you will enter in the screen form provided. Be sure to overwrite the prompts for your serial number and key. They must be typed exactly as sent to you. Click on **Register Me!** to enter your information. When it is successful there will be a confirmation message that you are now registered. You will no longer see the momentary opening screen when running **VbReader** and your serial number will appear in the reader identification field of your tagline.

4.2 Saving the Configuration

Whenever a configuration item is changed it will be saved right away.

5.0 Reading Mail

VbReader is very easy to use due to the adherence to the user interface standards of Microsoft Windows. Likewise, the operation of **VbReader** is simple and straight forward. The purpose of this Section is to guide the user through a typical session with **VbReader**.

Typically you will download a mail packet from your BBS. You will need a communications program and modem to do this. Most packets follow the Qmail standard which is recognized by **VbReader**.

VbReader will allow you to read and respond to your BBS mail in the most convenient way. The main menus are:

File

Opening of mail packets, replies packet creation, file management, printer configuration.

Edit

Windows Cut, Copy, and Paste functions during editing.

View Items

Choose items that are available in the mail packet.

View Lists

See what conferences are available when entering new mail.

Tools

Create a twit list, select messages based on a query, add or delete conferences.

Quick Configuration

Set up user preferences. See Section 4.

About

Version number, date, and author's copyright notice. See Section 13.

When reading your mail you will use the **File** menu to select a packet and then the **View Items** menu to see what is available for you to read.

5.1 File Menu

In order to get to your downloaded mail packet, click on the **File** menu. The choices are:

Open Mail Packet

Select a mail packet to open.

Create Replies Packet

After finishing entering replies, create a mail packet for uploading.

Delete Mail Packet

Delete unwanted mail packets.

Save Message as Text

When reading a message it can be saved as a text file.

Insert Text File

When replying to a piece of mail a pre-written text file can be inserted into the response.

Printer Config...

Set up the printer for printing out messages.

Print Message

Print the message.

Cleanup and Exit

Delete the content of the work directory and leave the program.

Exit

Leave the present mail etc. in the work directory and leave the program.

Only some of the menu choices will be available depending on the context. To get a mail packet, choose **Open Mail Packet** by clicking on it. **VbReader** will search in its work directory for existing data from another mail packet. If you previously had opened a mail packet, the work directory would contain files. At this point the program would ask you if you wished to purge the directory to delete the old data. However, since you do not yet have any data in the work directory, **VbReader** will directly invoke a file dialog box. The box will display the contents of the download directory from which you can select a mail packet. Double click on your choice.

Once a mail packet is selected, **VbReader** will launch PKUNZIP.EXE in a DOS window to uncompress the packet. It will be expanded and the resulting files will be put into the work directory. When the expansion process is complete, you may read the messages.

5.2 View Items Menu

A mail packet may contain more items other than just mail. There may be announcements and so on that you had instructed the BBS to send you when you

configured it. Click on the **View Items** menu option to see what is available. A list of options appear; the ones that are available are shown in a solid mode while the unavailable ones are greyed out.

A summary of available items is:

Your Replies

Edit and manage your mail replies. This is discussed in Section 8.1.

Personal Mail

Read and manage your personal mail from all conferences for the mail packet.

Join Conference

Pick a conference to read mail from.

New Files

Read the file of new files available on the BBS.

BBS News

Read the BBS news files.

Bulletins

Read the BBS bulletins.

Services

List the BBS services such as newspapers, externally supplied files, etc.

Magazines

List the BBS magazines.

Welcome Screen

Read the BBS opening screen.

Goodbye Screen

Read the BBS closing screen.

5.2.1 Personal Mail Choice

If there was any personal mail in your opened packet there will be a beep and information window to indicate it.

Clicking on this option will cause **VbReader** to list your personal messages. If any exist, a list will appear, listing the message dates, originator, destination (you) and the subject. Double-click on the desired message to view it. You may also use the Arrow

keys or Page Down or Page Up keys to select a message and press Enter to view it.

When you are finished reading your personal mail click on the **Done** button.

5.2.2 Join Conference Choice

When you configured the mail utility on the BBS you chose a number of conferences to monitor. The mail that was gathered for you, whether it was personal to you or public, will be available for you to read.

Clicking on this item will cause a list of conferences to be displayed. Only conferences in which there are any messages to be read will be listed. The list also displays the number of messages in each conference. To choose a conference, double-click on any one of them. A list showing the available messages is displayed. Like the Personal Messages list, it displays the Subject, Message Number, Originator, Destination and the message index number. Double Click on a message to view it., or use the Arrow Keys, Page Down or Page Up Keys followed by **ENTER**.

More detail is provided below to get the most out of this important item.

5.2.3 New Files Choice

This menu item will cause **VbReader** to invoke the editor program selected in the **Quick Configuration | Editor Selections | Files List Editor** configuration option. The default is **WRITE.EXE**. The editor will then display the list of new files which is usually included in your mail packet. While in the editor, you may search for topics, edit the file, and generally use normal editor functions.

5.2.4 BBS News Choice

This menu item will cause **VbReader** to invoke the editor program selected in the **Quick Configuration | Editor Selections | News Editor** configuration option. This will normally be **VBANSI.EXE**; this Windows ANSI view will display ANSI files in color.

5.2.5 Bulletins Choice

This menu item will cause **VbReader** to invoke the editor program selected in the **Quick Configuration | Editor Selections | Bulletins Editor** configuration option. If Bulletins were included in the mail packet, a list will appear listing the bulletins. Double click on a bulletin to run **VBANSI.EXE**.

5.2.6 Services Choice

If Services were included in the packet, a list will appear listing them. You will then

have to manually launch an editor, and/or PKUNZIP to process the service.

5.2.7 Magazines Choice

If Magazines were included in the packet, a list will appear listing them. You will then have to manually launch an editor, and/or PKUNZIP to process the magazine

5.2.8 Welcome Screen Choice

This menu item will cause **VbReader** to invoke the editor program selected in the **Quick Configuration | Editor Selections | Ansi Viewer** configuration option. This option launches the viewer and displays the BBS Welcome Screen. This will normally be **VBANSI.EXE**.

5.2.9 Goodbye Screen Choice

This menu item will cause **VbReader** to invoke the editor program selected in the **Quick Configuration | Editor Selections | Ansi Viewer** configuration option. Like the BBS News menu, this option launches the viewer and displays the BBS goodbye screen, if this screen was included with your mail packet. This will normally be **VBANSI.EXE**.

5.3 Managing the Reader Screen

While reading mail you may select messages to view by one of two methods: mouse or keyboard.

5.3.1 Mouse Method

First, you may use the horizontal scroll bar at the bottom right of the screen. The scroll bar has a unique flashing "thumb button" on it. Clicking on the arrowed buttons with the mouse at either end will select the next or previous message in the conference. The right hand button goes forward and the left one goes in reverse. Clicking on the scroll bar will increment or decrement the message pointer by larger amounts (total number of messages / 10). You may also click on the thumb button and drag it left or right, thereby selecting messages.

5.3.2 Keyboard Method

For faster control of the screen, you may use the arrow keys. The up and down arrow keys will scroll the view screen up and down by a full screen. The left and right arrows will select the previous and next message, respectively.

For the keys to function as expected, the scroll bar must have the focus. Should the keys cease to function as expected, use the mouse and click on the scroll bar to restore the focus to that control.

All controls displayed in the reader screen have ALT keys assigned to them; they are called accelerator keys in Windows. Each control has an underlined letter in its caption. To activate a control, press the ALT key and the underlined letter to give the desired result.

5.4 The Message List

The Message list will appear once you select a conference from the Conference list after choosing **View Items | Join Conference**. You choose a message to read by double clicking on it. A **Message List** button will appear on the screen. While reading messages you may view the message list once more by clicking on the **Message List** button bar under the message scroll bar at the bottom right of the reader screen. You may also use the **ALT_M** key combination.

While viewing the message list, the Up and Down arrows will move the selection bar up or down by one message. **PgUp** and **PgDn** will move the selection bar for an entire screen. You may read a selected message by double clicking on it, or by pressing the **ENTER** key.

You can move to specific messages by typing the first letter of the subject field for the message.

When you are finished or replying to messages press the **Done** button to return you to the main menu choices.

5.4.1 Killing Messages

When you select the **Message List** you will see that the first message you read was highlighted and the last message you read was outlined. You may select all the read messages in that group by doing a **SHIFT CLICK** on the outlined message. You can then click on the **Kill** button to mark the messages as "killed" which means that they will be passed over if you attempt to read them again. When you first kill a message you will see "KILLED" in the message which indicates the action taken.

You can also select messages to kill or restore by doing a **CLICK AND DRAG** operation on the message list.

While reading a message you can kill it by pressing the **Kill** button.

5.4.2 Restoring Messages

If you choose a killed message from the Message List you can unkill it by pressing the **Restore** button. A range of killed messages may be restored by doing the choose and

SHIFT click operation and pressing the **Restore** button.

6.0 Replying to Mail

After having read your mail, or other people's mail, you may want to respond either publicly or privately to the originator, addressee, or some other individual. You can enter a new message too, if you want.

6.1 Starting a Reply

While reading messages, you may enter a reply by clicking on the **Reply** button. At this point **VbReader** will ask if you wish to include the message in your reply. If you answer 'yes', the message will be copied to the edit screen and include a quote announcement at the top of the message. The announcement refers to the name of the originator and the date. Otherwise, the reply screen will be shown empty.

6.2 Controlling the Reply Destination

Normally, the reply is automatically addressed to the person whose name appears in the **From:** field at the bottom right of the read screen. In most cases, this is adequate. However, in some cases, you may wish to address your reply to the person who started the subject thread. In such cases, you may re-direct the reply by doing the following:

Before pressing the **Reply** button, use the mouse and select the name of the person in the **TO:** field at the bottom right of the reader screen. Like all Windows programs, you select the name by a **CLICK AND DRAG** operation on the field. Once the name is selected, copy it to the clipboard by typing **CNTRL_INSERT**. Invoke the reply screen and paste the new destination over the **TO:** field by selecting the name (**CLICK AND DRAG**) and typing **SHIFT_INSERT**. You may also need to modify the quote line at the top of the message, depending on the context.

Should you wish to send this reply to a person whose name is not displayed anywhere, just type the correct name in the **TO:** field.

6.3 Setting the Message Security

The message you enter may be either **Private** or **Public**. When private, only the recipient may read it. When public, anyone in the conference will be able to read it. The security level is set by clicking on the appropriate radio button control at the bottom of the screen.

6.4 Other Message Displays

At the bottom of the reply screen you will see a number of display fields. They are used

to display information about your message. This includes:

Conf Num: This is the number of the conference where the mail resides.

Ref Num: This is a previous mail number that the mail refers to.

Msg Time: This is the time of your mail reply.

Date: This is the date of you mail reply.

Sys Time: This is the current system time.

6.5 Editing Commands

The editor is not very complex but is quite functional. You may use the mouse to move the cursor to any insertion point in the text. The mouse will also allow you to select text by doing a Click and Drag operation. **SHIFT_PGDN** will select all the text from the cursor to the end of the message.

Once text is selected you may delete it by using the **DELETE** key and cut or copy it to the clipboard by using the **Edit** menu. **SHIFT_DELETE** will cut the selected text and move it to the clipboard.

Once text is in the clipboard, you may paste it to another location. As a short cut, you may use the **CNTRL_INSERT** and **SHIFT_INSERT** key strokes to copy text to the clipboard and to paste it back in your message. The clipboard mechanism also allows text to be transferred to and from other applications; this is a Windows feature.

The text will automatically wrap at the right edge of the screen so there is no need to worry about a right margin. If you press the **ENTER** key, the cursor will move the insertion point immediately to the next line. Therefore, while typing new text, do not use the **ENTER** key at the end of each line. This inserts a "hard" new line character. This is unnecessary as **VbReader** will automatically format your message when it is saved. The reason is that you may be using proportional fonts, in which case line lengths will vary for a given number of characters. Pressing the **ENTER** key will insert a hard new line character, probably at the wrong place. Use the **ENTER** key only to terminate a paragraph. **VbReader** functions very much like a word processor in this regard.

Remember, even if a line of text appears overly long, **do not type ENTER**. Let **VbReader** wrap it on screen, and format it when the message is saved.

Should you wish to verify the formatting, use the **View Items | Your Replies** menu item. This will allow you to view and re-edit your replies. At this point the message has been formatted for display in a standard DOS editor screen (i.e.: the line length is adjusted to fit in a 80 character DOS editor screen).

Should the editing process (for a previously entered reply) involve changing the length

of a line, delete the CRLF (carriage return and line feed) characters at the end of the line (restore the basic reader screen wrap). When the message is saved, it will be reformatted properly.

Tabs are inserted by typing the **CNTRL_TAB** key sequence. That is because the Tab keystroke is used to navigate between screen objects and controls in Windows.

6.6 Tagline Selection

A tagline is normally a one line addition to the bottom of your message. It is normally used to add a "one liner" to your message. They can be humorous, informative, or whatever you want.

Once your message is complete, you may wish to select an appropriate tagline. At the bottom center of the screen, you will see a button marked **Tag Line**. Clicking on this button will invoke the tag selection window. This consists of a drop-down list box. When first invoked, the list box displays the current tagline. Clicking on the arrow button on the right of the text box will cause a list of taglines to be displayed. If the number of taglines exceeds the area available to display them, a scroll bar will also appear. Select the desired tagline by clicking on it. Click on the **OK** button to return to the edit screen. Note that the list box can only display the first 1000 taglines in your tag file. The tagline is not displayed in the edit screen; it is appended to the end of your message when you save it.

6.7 Saving the Message

When you are done with the editing, click on the **Save** button. A dialog box will appear asking you for confirmation. If you confirm that you wish to save the message, the message will be appended to the reply file in the **REPLIES** directory. If you select **Cancel**, you will be returned to the edit screen. Clicking the **NO** button will delete the reply and return you to the read screen.

When you have finished responding to the messages you can re-edit them (see Section 8.1) by using the **View Items | Your Replies**, enter new ones (see Section 7), or create a package of compressed replies for the BBS (see Section 9.2) by using the **File | Create Replies Packet**.

7.0 Entering a New Message

Click on the **New** button to enter a new message not linked to any particular message in a conference. The procedure is very similar to the **Reply** procedure except for the following.

7.1 Selecting a Message Conference

When entering a new message, you may explicitly declare which conference your message is intended for. You may either type the conference number in the appropriate field at the bottom left of the editor screen, or you may pick a conference from a list that is displayed when you click the **View Lists** menu item in the menu bar at the top of the screen.

When the list is displayed, select a conference by double clicking on it. The list will display 10000 conferences in three panels.

7.2 Selecting a Recipient

To address the message to a recipient, simply type the person's name in the **TO:** field at the bottom right of the edit screen.

7.3 Completion of Reply Messages

When you have finished entering messages you can re-edit the replies (see Section 8.1) by using the **View Items | Your Replies** or create a package of compressed replies for the BBS (see Section 9.2) by using the **File | Create Replies Packet**.

8.0 View Items Menu

Most of the **View Items** Menu have been described above in Section 5.2. The available choices are:

- Your Replies**
- Personal Mail**
- Join Conference**
- New Files**
- BBS News**
- Bulletins**
- Services**
- Magazines**
- Welcome Screen**
- Goodbye Screen**

One important Choice not yet discussed allows you to manage your replies.

8.1 Your Replies Choice

Before sending your replies to the BBS for everyone to read, you may wish to read them and perhaps edit them. This can be accomplished with the **View Items | Your Replies** Choice option.

Clicking this option will bring up a list of your replies. Double-click on the reply you wish to read. It will be displayed in the Read window. The Replies feature works in the same manner as the Read Messages mode.

When the editing of replies is complete, pressing the **Done** button will cause the old replies to be erased and a new reply file created with the newly edited replies.

As it stands, your replies are not yet a packet for uploading to the BBS. You can leave **VbReader** and come back later to continue to create more replies and they will be added to the existing ones. When you have finished all the replies you can bundle them together by creating a replies packet. See Section 9.2.

9.0 Files Menu

Most of the items in the **File** Menu have been discussed above. For completeness they are all listed again and the remaining ones are dealt with here.

9.1 Open Mail Packet

Select a mail packet to open. For a description see Section 5.1.

9.2 Create Replies Packet Choice

When you are finished editing all your replies you will want to select the **File | Create Replies Packet** option so you can upload them to the BBS. This choice will launch the compression program, PKZIP.EXE, which will compress your replies and move the resulting file to your upload directory which you configured in **Quick Configuration | Paths | Uploads**. You will be asked if you wish to delete the old replies (the ones that are now being processed). If a mail packet exists in the upload directory, the program will ask whether you wish to continue. If you continue, the old replies packet will be overwritten.

Once your reply packet is created, launch your communication program and upload it. The BBS will manage your replies from then on.

9.3 Delete Mail Packet Choice

Choose this item to display a list of mail packets that you may choose to delete from. Use standard Windows techniques to choose the files.

9.4 Save Message as Text Choice

While in the editor window, you may save the displayed text in the editor window. Save

the message as a plain ASCII text by using this option. This works whether you are replying or reading messages.

9.5 Insert Text File Choice

While in the editor window, you may insert a text file. Insert plain ASCII text into your reply message by using this option. This is useful when you want to insert the same prepared text into replies for a number of conferences or a number of individuals.

9.6 Printer Configuration Choice

VbReader can print a single message at a time. The printing feature is fairly basic in that there are no provisions for pagination of multiple page messages, even though it will print multiple page messages. However, most messages that you write will probably fit onto a single page.

In the **File** menu item, you will find the **Printer Config...** item. Clicking on this item will bring up a dialog box containing printer configuration items relating to **VbReader**. You have control over the following options.

9.6.1 Printer Font

This is a combo box containing the available printer fonts for the printer presently selected. The current font is displayed in the text box portion of the combo box. Clicking the button on the right hand side of the box will expand the list to display all the available fonts. Click on the desired font to select it.

9.6.2 Font Size

Use this text box to select the printer font size. Type in the size that you wish to use. If this size is not available, Windows will substitute the closest match.

9.6.3 Left Margin

This is the width of the left margin in inches; one inch is usually a good choice.

9.6.4 Top Margin

This is the top margin spacing. For most single sheet dot matrix printers, set this to 0. For most other kinds of printers, set it to one inch.

9.7 Print Message Choice

When you are reading messages you can print them out to the printer by choosing this

item. Your printer is configured as previously discussed.

9.8 Cleanup and Exit Choice

Delete the contents of the work directory and leave the program. Your replies will be left intact in the Replies directory.

9.9 Exit Choice

Leave the present mail etc. in the work directory and leave the program. You are able to come back and continue on with the existing mail packet.

10.0 Edit Menu

While editing messages you are able to use the **Cut**, **Copy**, and **Paste** functions that are commonly used in Windows applications. Use the mouse to select text and use **Cut** to extract the text out of the message to the Clipboard. You can position the mouse at another place within the text to either **Copy** or **Paste** the text.

11.0 View Lists Menu

When entering new mail you may see the list of available conferences to write into by choosing this item.

12.0 Tools Menu

There are a number of useful utilities that can be used in **VbReader**:

Twit Filter

Create a list of individuals whose messages will not appear.

Queries

Search message title or text for key words.

Add Conference

Create a message to instruct the host BBS mail program to add a conference from a list.

Drop Conference

Create a message to instruct the host BBS mail program to delete a conference from a list.

12.1 Twit Filter Choice

Sometimes you may not want to see messages from certain individuals. The **Twit Filter**

allows you to screen them out.

Under the **Tools** menu, you will find the **Twit Filter** option. This will invoke a dialog box containing a Combo box, a check box and a couple of control buttons.. The Combo box contains a list of names of message originators which you wish removed from all message lists. You can add names and remove them at will. When **VbReader** is terminated, all changes to the twit list are saved in a file called **TWITFILE.TXT** in the **DATAFILE** directory.

When the **Twit Filter** is activated via the check box, all messages bearing a author name included in the twit list are deleted from the message lists. Should you wish to see them, turn off the filter and re-select the conference you are interested in. As the message list is processed, messages previously filtered out will re-appear.

The **Twit Filter** can be applied to **SUBJECT**, **FROM**, and **TO** fields.

12.2 Queries Choice

The **Queries** feature in **VbReader** enables you to show you a class of messages that you can include or exclude depending on criteria that you provide. For example, suppose you want all messages in a conference that have the word "VBREADER" in the title of the message. You would use the query feature to find them all for you. It is not case sensitive.

The query is based on a number of key words that you provide in the list box when you select the **Queries Choice**. Type in the key word you want and then click on **Insert** to active it. Insert more key words for your search pattern. The search will succeed on finding any key word.

You can delete key words in the list box by clicking on the word after activating the list with the arrow down symbol to the right of the list box. Click on **Remove** to delete it from the list. If you want to remove all the key words then click on **Clear All**.

Normally the query is applied to the message title; however, you may include the message content as well by clicking on the box for **Include Msg Text**.

The **Action** of the query is to give you a list of messages that either satisfies the search criterion or not. Use the **Include** action to give you a list of messages that satisfy the query key words; otherwise, use the **Exclude** action to give you a list of messages that do not satisfy the query key words.

To start the search, click on **Do it**.

To cancel the effect of the query, click on **Undo Queries**.

Since the queries operate on the message list contents you can run successive queries to progressively zero in on the desired query criterion.

The queries are not saved; they are only valid while the queries screen is loaded. Do not close the query screen if you want to use its query list again; shrink it or put it in the background.

12.3 Add Conference Choice

Mail utilities found on a BBS enable you to add or delete conferences that you wish to monitor. You can use **VbReader** to send messages to the BBS to do this for you.

When you first set up the conference list you wish to monitor on the BBS you can usually have the BBS download a list of just the conferences that you monitor or a complete list of all available conferences. If you get the full list you may add new conferences to monitor.

When you choose to **Add Conference** you will be given an informational message to **Double Click on the Conference to be Added...** Click on **OK** to accept the message. Three panes of conferences will be available for you to choose from. When you choose one you will be asked, **Do you wish to receive Personal Mail?** Click on **YES** or **NO** depending on your preference. You will then be asked whether you want to **Add another Conf.** Click on **YES** or **NO** depending on your preference. Continue if you agreed. If you did not want to add another conference you will be asked, **Do you wish to save this message?** If you save the message it will be sent to the BBS when you create a mail packet (see **Files | Create Replies Packet**); otherwise, nothing will be done.

Depending on the mail door type that you chose in the **Quick Configuration | Packers and Door Commands**, the exact sequence and dialog text will vary. For example, some mail doors will not allow multiple conferences to be added or dropped in one message. If you had chosen such a door type, for example CMPMAIL, then you will not get **Add another Conf** dialog box message.

12.4 Drop Conference Choice

You can delete a conference in a similar fashion to adding a conference.

13.0 About Menu

When you click on this menu item you will find the **VbReader** version number, date, and author's copyright notice.

14.0 VbReader Limitations

Number of conferences containing messages: 700
Number of messages per conference: 700
Number of conferences listed in the View List menu: 10000
Maximum conference Number: 9999
Number of messages per Conference: 700
Number of replies: 700
Number of taglines displayed in the list box: 1000

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