

Powerline Offline reader for Windows

Powerline Offline Reader for Windows - Version 1.0.

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Introduction

Powerline Offline Reader for Windows is a "One QWK at a time" OLR but with the facility to save messages to a database divided into Folders. Replies created with the program are also automatically saved into a special folder reserved for this purpose.

To read a QWK mail packet, a list of files is presented from which to choose, with the ability to alter the search pattern or directory.

Having chosen the QWK packet POW calls PKUNZIP to extract the data. This data is then read and internal tables created which are used later to select conferences etc.

If a corresponding REP packet is found in the specified replies directory(see later) it is checked for date/time with respect to that of the QWK pkt, and an option provided to delete it if it's earlier ie. the user may have already uploaded it. If it exists the REP pkt is then unzipped and the replies made available in the reader for viewing or editing. Replies are rezipped into a REP pkt using PKZIP when a new QWK pkt is chosen to view or on exit. If you are making a lot of replies an option is provided (from the Editor - File Menu) to save them back to REP, for safety.

Context sensitive Help is available from most windows/dialogs/menu items by pressing F1 key.

POW was written in Microsoft Visual Basic v3.0 Professional Edition & requires VBRUN300.DLL.

Installation

Create a directory for the program and copy POW.EXE, POW.HLP, POW.WRI, and the other files extracted from the ZIP into it, except as follows:- Put GRID.VBX and CMDIALOG.VBX into the Windows\System directory. Take care not to replace any newer versions of these files that are already there. POW also uses COMMDLG.DLL (supplied with Windows, same directory). (TAGLINES.POW should later be moved to the Data directory which may be created by POW - see below.)

If you do not already have it, obtain a copy of VBRUN300.DLL (not included in ZIP) and put it in the Windows\System directory. PKZIP.EXE & PKUNZIP.EXE (version 2) are also required and should be available from the DOS path. VBRUN300.DLL and the PK programs are available from most BBS's and CompuServe.

Decide on a directory where the program's data files will reside. These are the Folders data and index files. If the directory does not exist it will be created by the program provided it is a sub-directory off an existing directory (such as the program directory).

A temporary "work" directory is also required, where temporary files used by POW are kept. This will be created by POW and as with the Data directory, must be a sub-directory off an existing directory. Program speed is improved if this is on RAMDRIVE.

The other directory paths to set up are where your QWK and REP files reside, these too will be created if they do not already exist.

POW will create the file POW.INI in the Windows directory when first run. This may later be moved to the program directory if desired. POW will search the program directory first. POW does not modify WIN.INI or any other Windows file or AUTOEXEC.BAT etc.

POW may be activated from an icon in Program Manager in the usual way. An icon is available in the EXE (and another is supplied as POW.ICO). The Path should be the directory containing POW.EXE. There are no Command Line Parameters.

The Directories Dialog.

When POW is first run, the directory paths should be set up in the Directories Dialog from the Options Menu as follows:-

QWK File Pattern	Search pattern for QWK files - eg. *.QW? or *.Q??
QWK Directory	Path to the directory containing your QWK pkts
Replies Directory	Path to the directory containing your REP pkts
SaveAs Directory	Path to the directory for saving text files and messages.
Data Directory	Directory for the Folders Data and index files
Work Directory	Directory for temporary files. All files in this dir will be deleted on exit or when reading a new QWK packet. The directory itself is removed on exit if on the same drive as the EXE.

Click on the **Save** button (or Alt-S on keyboard) to save these settings.

A file, POW.INI, is created in the Windows directory. This contains these and other settings/options. No changes are made to WIN.INI or any other Windows files.

The Main Menu

On line Help is available by highlighting the menu item and pressing F1.

File
View
Options
Help

File Menu

Open QWK Packet	Displays Dialog box from which QWK pkt is selected
Save Replies	Save Rep pkt back to HD (if one exists)
Kill (Delete) REP	Kill all replies/msgs and delete the REP file if it exists
Save Msg to File	Save the msg to a file via a SaveAs dialog where an existing file may be selected for Appending or a new file name entered.
Print Msg	Print a msg using the Font etc. in the Printer Font in the Options Menu.
Exit Reader	Save all data and Exit

View Menu

Folders	Show list of Folders - select a folder to view
Conferences	Show list of conferences
RepPkt	List of replies in REP pkt
Bulletins	Bulletin list
NewFiles	New Files list
News	BBS News
Welcome	Welcome (Hello) screen
Goodbye	Goodbye screen
Session	Text of the Mailrun Session

Options Menu

Directories	Set up directories for QWK, REP, Data and temp work
Toggles	Enable or Disable features such as warning beep
Sort Options	Sort field etc. for QWK list, Message lists etc.
Font (msgs)	Select the Font used to display messages, including Size, Bold etc.
Printer Font	Select the Font used to print text, including Size, Bold etc.
Colors	Displays a dialog from which the required colour change may be made. Colours and Fonts etc. are saved in POW.INI and used in later runs.
Maintain Database	Displays Folders Database Statistics & Maintenance box from which the Folders database file may be packed, purging deleted messages.
Add/Drop Confs	Calls the Door Control dialog which shows a list of conferences from which the user may choose Add, Drop or Reset. The Reset button has an associated Text box into which the message number may be put. Use a negative number to select the last so-many messages to read.

Help Menu

Help Contents	Display help at the Contents page
Keyboard	Use of Keyboard
How to use Help	Instructions for using the Windows Help system
Read Documentation	Call Write to read the doc
About	Program Info

ButtonBar

Buttons provide the following functions:-

- QWK** Call the QWK File Open Dialog. Same as File/Open QWK Pkt
- Conf** Show the Conference List. Same as View/Conferences
- REP** Shows replied in REP Pkt. Same as View/RepPkt
- Fold** Shows the Folder List. Same as View/Folders
- Art** Calls the Viewing Screen to show msg in Text or Graphics (ANSI Art).
- Tag** Copies first line of marked text into a one line text editing box in Tagline Editor dialog. The tagline may be edited before adding it to the Taglines list using the Add button.
- Send** (REPLIES Folder Only) Send reply/msg again.
- Write** Enter a new message into the REP pkt. Calls the Editor. (see also Reply below)
- Reply** Either marked text or all of the msg is converted to a quote and entered into the internal editor where a reply may be written. Also displayed above the edit box is the reply header. Certain fields of this may be edited or info selected from pick lists.
- Edit** (Replaces **Reply** for "REP" or "REPLIES Folder") Edit reply/msg.
- Save** Save the message to a folder. A list of folders is shown from which to choose, or a new folder may be created.
- Kill** (Folders and REP only) Kill (delete) the current message in the folder (or REPlies). Msgs marked as deleted are not displayed nor count towards the number of msgs in the Folder. Deleted msgs may be purged from the Folders data file using Pack Database from the Folders Statistics & Database Maintenance dialog from Options/Maintain Database menu.
- Index** Displays a list of the messages in the current conference, folder or REP packet. This also shows whether a message has been read, saved, or replied to and if private.
- Prev** Go to previous message in conference/folder/REP if it exists. If first msg in a conference this will go on to the previous conference. Optionally, this feature is also available when reading folders. "Allow Next Folder" in Options/Toggles dialog.
- Next** Go to next message. If last msg in a conference this will go on to the next conference. Optionally, this feature is also available when reading folders.

Main Window Keyboard Usage

Underlined letters on the Button Bar indicate keys to press as an alternative to clicking on the button with the mouse.

PgDn/PgUp keys page down and up in msg.

Space bar pages down till the bottom of the msg then goes to next msg (same as Next button).

The QWK File Open Dialog

This Dialog is used to select a QWK mail packet for viewing (or deleting).

A table gives the following information:-

Filename

Size

Date & Time

Msgs in QWK pkt

% **Read** - (of messages)

Number of **Personal** msgs

Number of msgs **Replied** to

The directory and drive may be changed in the usual way and also the file search Pattern. This uses the usual DOS wildcards.

To select a QWK file select it and click on **OK** or double-click on the table entry.

Buttons:-

OK Read selected QWK pkt or enact change of Pattern, Directory or Drive.

Update Update file list (if you've altered things by switching out to File Manager etc.)

Hide Hides selected file by renaming to BBSID.!01. Where BBSID is the name the BBS uses for QWK & REP pkts. Earlier renamed files are renumbered to make room - up to 99. When 99 files have been renamed/renumbered the BBSID.!99 file is deleted and all others moved up.

Kill Kill (Delete) selected QWK file.

Cancel Return to Main Window.

The Conference List

This is a list of conferences which contain messages in the current QWK packet. The fields comprise the Number, Name, number of messages and number of UnRead messages. Personal messages also appear in a special PERSONAL section.

Buttons

Read Read messages from first in conference (may be sorted by subject)

List List the messages (may be sorted by subject)

Close Close conference list

The Folder List

This is a list of Folders which the user has created plus the special REPLIES folder which contains copies of replies created with POW. This is used either to view messages already saved or to select a folder in which to save the currently displayed message.

Fields are:- Number, Name, number of messages saved in each folder.

Buttons:-

Read Read messages from first in folder (may be sorted by subject)

List List the messages in the folder (may be sorted by subject)

Save Available when saving message to a folder

Add Add a new folder

Edit Edit the name of the selected folder

Delete Mark selected folder (if empty) as "Unused" and delete associated index file.

Close Close the Folder List and return to Main Window

Message Lists

A list of the messages may be displayed for either Conference, Folder or REP pkt.

The fields are:- MsgNum, From, To, Subject, Flags.

In the case of the conference lists the flag column shows whether the msg has been Read, Saved to folder, Replied to, or is Private.

The Directories Dialog.

This is used to change directory paths or the search pattern used to find QWK packet files. The input fields are divided into two sections. Changes to fields in the top section will have immediate effect but any changes made in the other will require a program restart.

QWK File Pattern	Search pattern for QWK files - eg. *.QW? or *.Q??
QWK Directory	Path to the directory containing your QWK pkts
Replies Directory	Path to the directory containing your REP pkts
SaveAs Directory	Path to the directory for saving text files and messages.
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Data Directory	Directory for the Folders Data and index files
Work Directory	Directory for temporary files. All files in this dir will be deleted on exit or when reading a new QWK packet. The directory itself is removed on exit if on the same drive as the EXE.

Click on the **Save** button (or Alt-S on keyboard) to save these settings.

A file, POW.INI, is created in the Windows directory. This contains these and other settings/options. No changes are made to WIN.INI or any other Windows files.

Directories will be created if required providing they are a sub-directory of an existing directory.

The Toggles Dialog

Warning Beep	Turn warning sounds on/off
Show Progress Boxes	Turn Progress Boxes on/off. Users with fast machines may prefer to disable these.
Continue to Next Folder	"Next" continues to next folder (or not), or "Prev" goes back to previous folder.
Allow Msg Text Editing	The Text of an original msg may be edited to facilitate quoted text formatting. eg. a paragraph may be split so that you can reply to each part separately. The editing only affects quoted text and Save will copy the original text of the msg to a Folder.

These settings may be Saved "Permanently"(in POW.INI) or Temporarily, in which case the change(s) will only apply for this run, reverting to the "permanent" settings when POW is next run.

Sort Options

QWK File	Sets the order in which the QWK files are listed in the File Open dialog. Sort on Name or Date/Time - Ascending or Descending.
Conf Msg List	Sort by Subject or Number(unsorted)
Folder Msg List	Sort by Subject or Number(unsorted)

These settings may be Saved "Permanently"(in POW.INI) or Temporarily, in which case the change(s) will only apply for this run, reverting to the "permanent" settings when POW is next run.

Change Color Dialog

This consists of a **List Box** containing a list of colors which may be changed, and buttons **Set** and **Cancel/Close**. The **Set** button calls a standard Windows color dialog. After setting up the colors as desired, the **Close** button will return to the appropriate Window and change the colors.

The Font Dialog

Font from the **Options Menu** brings up a dialog box containing a list of **Fonts** available on your system from which an alternative font may be chosen for the message display in the main window. The **size** and **bold** may be changed too. Sample text in the selected font and size etc. is shown so that you can see the effect before pressing the **OK** button to make the changes take effect. A **Cancel** button is also provided.

This allows the user to choose a bigger or nicer looking font than the default Terminal Font. However, please note that only Terminal Font will produce the correct format for the message and properly display ASCII chars above 128 such as graphics and the pound sign. Unless, of course, you have another fixed font with the ASCII (OEM) character set.

The selected Font etc. is saved in the POW.INI file and will be used next time POW is run.

The Folders Database Statistics & Maintenance Window

This displays Folders database information and provides buttons for showing the **QWK File Info** and accessing the **Pack Database** feature.

The following information about the Folders Database is displayed :-

- Number of Folders.
- Total number of messages in the Folders (excluding deleted msgs).
- Number of msgs in the REPLIES Folder.
- Number of Deleted msgs.

The disk space used is also shown:-

- Size of Folders Data file
- Bytes used by index (.FDX) files. (And number of index files)
- Estimated extra disk space required to Pack the database.

The **QWK File Info** shows the information that POW has accumulated about the QWK packets read. This includes the BBS ID, Date/Time of file, Number of msgs in pkt, % msgs read, Number of Personal msgs, Number of msgs Replied to. This data is stored in the BOOKMARK.POW file in the Data Directory.

Pack Database reads the Folders data file and removes all messages marked as deleted, closing up the gaps and building a new file. At the same time, the Folders index (.FDX) files are rebuilt from info in the Folders Data file.

The TomCat Mail Door Control dialog

This shows the complete list of conferences available on the BBS (at the time the QWK packet was created) from which the user may choose **Add**, **Drop** or **Reset**. The Reset button has an associated Text box into which a message number may be put. This is the message number from which to start. If you want to read the last N messages without knowing the current msg number then use a negative number.

eg. -50 will select the latest 50 messages to read in the next QWK pkt.

Only the TomCat mail door is currently supported.

If you have the Session Text feature enabled and present in your QWK pkts, this may be checked to see which conferences you have currently enabled on the BBS. Use **Session** from the **View** Menu to view it.

Replying to Messages (and creating new ones)

You may create a Reply to a message showing in the main window. Using the mouse or keyboard, mark the text you wish to quote, then click on the **Reply** button or press the **R** key. The built-in Editor is then loaded and the selected text will be displayed in the Edit Box, reformatted if necessary and with leading Quote markers at the beginning of each line. The text cursor is placed below the quoted text.

As an alternative, you may "quote" the whole original message into the editor and then delete parts not needed. This occurs if no text is selected (marked). The **Reply** button or **R** key will invoke the Editor as above.

To create a new message or reply without quoting from the original, click on the **Write** button or press the **W** key to call the Editor.

Text may now be entered and edited using all the usual Windows editing functions. See **The Internal Editor** for more information.

Saving Replies

Having created your msg/reply as above it is saved to a Replies file for adding to the REP pkt later and also copied to the REPLIES Folder, from where it may be recovered if required and re-sent or edited as the basis of another message. This is achieved by selecting Save & Exit from the Editor File Menu.

If you want to send the same or similar message to more than one person you may select Carbon Copy from the Editor File Menu, which saves the message as above but remains in the Editor. The recipient's name (and any other particular) may then be changed and the message saved as above. To send to several people use the Carbon Copy as many times as required.

Replies created with the Editor are packed into a REP packet file when a different QWK packet is selected for viewing or when Exiting the program. Also, a menu option is provided to let the user save replies to the REP pkt at any time (for peace of mind when making a lot of replies).

Viewing your Replies

Replies either already in the REP pkt or waiting, may be viewed from either the Menu or the **REP** Button on the Button Bar. A list is displayed from which a reply may be selected for viewing. Once the message is displayed, it may be edited and saved back if desired.

The Internal Editor

An editor is provided in which to create replies or enter new messages. In addition to a text editing box, the message header is also displayed with the option to change certain fields. These are **To**, **Subject**, **Conference** & **Tagline**.

The **To**, **Subject** and **Tagline** fields have associated "Pick Lists". New items may be added to a list by clicking on the adjacent **Add** button, or an existing item may be selected from the drop-down list. The text in these fields may be edited in the usual way. These "Pick Lists" are saved as text files TO.POW, SUBJECT.POW & TAGLINES.POW in the Data directory and may be edited or added to with a standard text editor such as NotePad.

The **Conference** may be changed by selecting from the drop-down list.

Check boxes may be used to make the message PRIVATE or Request Return Receipt.

Editor Menu

- File** **Carbon Copy** (no exit), **Save & Exit** or **Exit Editor** (Abort - no save).
- Edit** This provides Windows **Clipboard** functions plus **Undo** and **Select All**, plus access to the **Signatures** dialog box.
- Colors** Calls the color change dialog.
- Help** Shows the appropriate Help sections.

Editor File Menu

- Carbon Copy** Saves the message without leaving the Editor. This allows the To name to be changed and the message saved again if the same or similar message is to be sent to more than one person. For more than two recipients, the Carbon Copy feature may be used as often as required.
- Save & Exit** Saves the message and exits the Editor. This is the normal means of saving messages.
- Exit Editor** Leaves the Editor without saving, providing an Abort message facility.
If a message has been edited and not saved (with Carbon Copy), a warning message is displayed, with the option to return to Editor.

Edit Box

When the editor is first entered from the **Reply** button, either selected text or the complete original message is reformatted and quoting characters added to the start of each line. The text cursor is placed below the quoted text. If a new message is to be created (from the **Enter** button) the Edit Box is empty, ready for the text of the new message.

In entering text all the usual Windows editing functions are available. Text may be cut/copied/pasted to/from any other window including other Windows apps or another window in the Reader (eg. the original msg). Most of this information is in the Windows manuals or in the on-line Help. Terminal font is used to provide compatibility with other message readers (uses the ASCII char set as opposed to the Windows ANSI set).

NOTE:- This editor (and message viewer) supports the Tab function. (Use Ctrl+Tab to insert a Tab - the Tab key alone changes field). Some other readers do not support the Tab character and other users may not receive your message correctly formatted.

The Signatures Dialog

The signatures features provides the facility to have multiple "signature blocks". These are blocks of text held in files which may be appended to the message. These are normally used to "sign" a message with extra bits such as Internet address, where you live etc., but any text may be used. (Even a whole msg if you like as an alternative to the Carbon Copy feature.)

The dialog box contains an editing **Text Box** with option buttons to select the source of the text, a **Table of Signature Files** listing the files available with descriptions, a **Description** box and buttons for **Save**, **Paste** & **Close**.

Text in a msg currently in the Edit Box in the Editor may be marked for use as a "signature block" and be copied into a text box in the Signatures Dialog, or new text may be entered directly.

Having copied or entered text into the **Text Box** and entered a **Description**, the text may be saved to disk using the **Save** button. A text file is created in the Data Directory.

Blocks of text saved in this way (or created using another editor if you like) may be viewed in the **Text Box** and inserted at the end of the message in the Editor's Edit Box using the **Paste** button. A signature block may also be entered by using keys **F2** to **F10** whilst in the Editor. These keys are listed in the **Table of Signature Files** with the description. Note, **F1** is used for on-line **help**.

Viewing Screen

This is a Window containing a box for viewing Text or Graphics (ANSI colour etc.) plus Option Buttons to choose **Text** or **Graphics** and **Colors**, **File**, **Print**, **Stop** and **Close** Buttons.

If **Text** is selected any ANSI code sequences are stripped from the text and the remaining plain text displayed in a scrolling Text Box.

If **Graphics** is selected the ANSI code sequences are obeyed to give colour and cursor positioning and displayed in a Picture Box. Scrolling is available by using the PgUp or PgDn key to page up/down by two lines less than the window and the up/down cursor keys to scroll up or down by two lines. RIP graphics are detected and a warning message displayed. This version of POW will not display RIP graphics.

Colors allows changing the Window and text colors.

File provides the facility to save text to a file via a SaveAs dialog where an existing file may be selected for Appending or a new file name entered.

Print allows printing a text file using the Font etc. set up in the Printer Font in the Options Menu.

Stop allows the user to stop the display of a Picture before completion.

Registration Details Dialog

This is accessed from the Shareware Registration Reminder Screen at startup from the **Enter Reg Code** button. When you register POW you quote the name which you would like displayed as your **Registered Name** and you will be given a **Registration Code** to enter into the POW **Registration Details Dialog**.

The **Registration Details Dialog** consists of two text boxes and two buttons. Enter your **Registered Name** and **Registration Code** in the text boxes exactly as specified. Press **OK** to make POW check the details. If the code has not been entered correctly an **error message** is displayed and the entry must be re-edited or choose **Cancel** to close and return to the Shareware Registration Reminder Screen.

Registration & Contact Details - Benefits of Registering

UK & Europe

To register **POW** print out and complete the registration form **REGISTER.TXT** (this may be done from within POW from a Shareware Registration Reminder, or in DOS, COPY REGISTER.ASC > PRN) and send together with a cheque or postal order made out to Powerline Systems Ltd for £20 plus VAT (£23.50 total) to:-

Powerline Systems Ltd
44 Rydal Way
Ruislip
Middx.
HA4 0RU
ENGLAND

USA & Canada

To register **POW** print out and complete the registration form **REGISTER.USA** (this may be done from within POW from a Shareware Registration Reminder, or in DOS, COPY REGISTER.ASC > PRN) and send together with a Check/Money order for **\$35(US)** made out to:

Southland Trading Company
900-91 Howard Avenue
Escondido
CA. 92029
USA

Support may be obtained by contacting the author, Gina Davis, via the Direct Line BBS, London. Call 081 845 8228 (10 Lines) - 8/N/1 - All speeds - Ansi or RIP terminal recommended.

Support may also be obtained via UKCOMP on CompuServe, address messages to Gina Davis on CompuServe ID 70374,1277

For site registration or marketing related information please contact Powerline Systems at the address above, or via a Direct-Line message to 'Sysop', or a message on CompuServe's UKCOMP forum addressed to Steve Manners on CompuServe ID 70007,4737

Benefits of registering **POW** include removal of the **Registration Reminders** and your **Registered Name** appears in the **About** window. Also, registered users receive highest priority for requests for improvements. Income from registrations enables continued support and development of **POW**.

See **ReadMe.Txt** for last minute changes and further information.

Disclaimer

This is the first Shareware version of **POW**. It has been in Beta Test for several months and bugs corrected when found, but no guarantee is given or implied that there are no further problems waiting to be found. Please report any problems to the author (see above). Any feedback is much appreciated.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Janet Barkaway for help with the original concept and for help and support in the subsequent development and testing of this program.

I am also grateful for ideas and suggestions from users of other offline readers and discussions in the ILink Shareware and other international conferences.

Powerline Offline reader for Windows was written in Microsoft Visual Basic for Windows.

APPENDIX A - Limits

Number of QWK Files (per dir) .	200
Size of QWK files	4,000,000
Number of Conferences per pkt	10,000
Highest Conference Number . . .	9999
Messages per Conference . . .	1,000
Messages per QWK pkt	10,000
Messages per REP pkt	1,000
Characters per Message. . . .	30,000
Number of Bulletins	1,000
Characters per Bulletin . . .	30,000
Number of Folders	1,000
Messages per Folder	1,000

POW - **P**owerline **O**ffline Reader for **W**indows - Version 1.0.
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