





There is a new generation of desk accessories entering the Macintosh market. The early desk accessories were simple programs useful only for narrowly defined purposes. Recently several new desk accessories have been introduced that are powerful and/or flexible enough to compare with many stand alone programs.

An outstanding example of this new generation is DAtabase from Preferred Publishers. DAtabase is a powerful, full featured, data base program in desk accessory format that supports text, color images, and graphics.

It is the perfect solution for those with a large number of desk accessories under the Apple menu since this one program easily replaces several other desk accessories (phone books, reminders, calendars, note pads, to-do lists, and scrapbooks, for examples).

However, different from most other desk accessory data base programs, DAtabase is a powerful program that compares with many more expensive stand alone programs and is capable of sophisticated uses. Business records, client information, parts lists with scanned pictures, and retail inventories are easily handled with DAtabase.

Actually DAtabase comes in two parts. A stand alone application called DAtabase Builder that is used to create the actual files and a desk accessory which is used to view the files and to work with (edit) the information stored there. Let's start with the Builder first.

#### • **DAtabase Builder**

DAtabase Builder opens to a blank screen with a tool pallet and a selection of menu based features. The first thing you will need to do is select a background picture that provides the look of the file. You create these background pictures using MacPaint or other paint program that saves in MacPaint format.

The background field or picture gives the database file a distinctive look. For example, a phone number database can look just like a book by selecting a picture of a book for the background field. Our phone book could look like a index card, Rolodex card, or anything else your imagination allows.

Next, we want to set up the text label or how the information will be laid out over the background picture. This provides the structure of the database file. For example, if we wanted to set up a address database, we would need a label for each of these; the first name, last name, street, city, and so on. We don't actually enter in the first name (etc.), just the label we want to call each entry.

Next we create the text fields, or the blank lines where we want the of information to go. To continue our example above, we have several labels, first name, last name, address, etc. Now we put in the blank beside the first name label where we want the first name to be entered. The size of the blank is determined by dragging with the mouse.

There are other fields we can choose from. A check field is used if we want check boxes beside a list of options. Looking at our address database, we could have a check list with the words family, friend, business acquaintance, or whatever. When you finally enter the names and addresses in the desk accessory you would simply check (with the mouse) which item on this list applies to the person entered on each card.

We could do something similar with a Popup List field. Instead of having a long checklist with the words family, friend, etc, we could list all this on a popup menu (similar to the Mac's pull down menus) that inserts the applicable item we select into a blank set aside for this.

DAtabase Picture Fields can store pictures of any type and any size, including Encapsulated Postscript images. Normally only part of the graphic can be seen through a small window, with the ability to move the graphic around using the hand cursor. However click twice on the picture to see it full screen.

A calculated field allows separate entries to be calculated together to give still another entry. For example, we could add phone capabilities to our address file (see XTRAs below) and have one entry for the amount of time spend on the call, another entry with the cost per minute of the call, and the third entry would give us the total cost of the call.

There are many other options available. The background pattern can be changed, borders can be placed

around entries or any other item, and you have complete control over fonts, fontsize, and style for each entry.

Of course, in the Macintosh spirit, all of these options are available from a tool pallet and selected with the mouse. The mouse is used to lay out everything in our database. Clicking on a tool from the tool pallet puts a selected item into the work area and the item is dragged into place with the mouse.

Changing the layout is easily done (even after data is entered) by simply opening a database file using DAtabase Builder and dragging things into new locations using the mouse.

### • Xtra Features

DAtabase also uses external commands called Xtra Features. Once installed, Xtra Features act like mini-programs (routines) attached to the main program and can perform any function necessary. This provides a way for anyone to customize and extend the functions of DAtabase.

If a feature or function that you need is not included within DAtabase, an Xtra Feature could be written to handle your special needs. This insures that the program will be useful for just about anybody and greatly extends the power of the program.

For example, to add a phone dialing function to our address file we would select Xtra Features from the tool pallet to bring up a list of the routines that come with DAtabase. Select the Dial Phone option and Xtra Features will place a button called "Dial Phone" in the address file. A dialog box will appear for you to enter dialing options such as touch tone phone, dialer preferences, modem or printer port, etc. Now when ever we click on this button DAtabase will dial a number listed in our address file.

The Paint Grabber Xtra allows you to copy portions of any MacPaint document from within a DAtabase file. The Text Grabber Xtra will copy portions of a text file, clipboard file, or another DAtabase file. The is a time and date Xtra, a calendar Xtra, a screen fade Xtra, and several others are included on the disk.

The advanced user can create their own Xtra Features using a standard development system. The samples included in the manual are written in Pascal, but I believe other languages can be used. These new features can be independent from DAtabase or integrated into the program to add seamless new functions. A chapter describes the complete process. A converter utility is also included to convert Fkeys into Xtra features.

For us less advanced users with a modem, Preferred Software has a on-line bulliten board that you can call to download new Xtra features created by others. The phone number is included with the instruction manual and is free (except for the phone call).

### • The Desk Accessory

Now that we have built our address file, and it is saved on the disk, we quit the DAtabase Builder and select the DAtabase desk accessory from under the Apple Menu. A minifinder appears and we add our new address book to this finder. The next time we want our address book we simply click on the icon in this minifinder just like we would in the normal Macintosh Finder.

Our address book appears just like we created it in the Builder. On the side is another tool pallet with tools for searching, sorting, printing, saving, and others.

We simply enter the information into the applicable blanks that we created earlier. Click on the blank and start typing. Moving to the next entry is a easy as clicking the mouse or hitting the tab key.

Text fields are setup in the Builder and occasionally the field (area allowed for inserting information) is smaller then the amount necessary to support the text we want to enter. DAtabase handles this well by automatically inserting scroll bars into text fields if you enter more text than would be visible in that text field. If the text is later removed, or reduced in size to fit into the allowed field area, the scroll bar is removed.

As we insert information into our address file, we can return at any time to edit, insert, add, or delete any entry. Clicking the mouse above a field returns the cursor to that field. Even after the file is saved, any changes can be made and will automatically be saved to disk as DAtabase is closed.

Once the information is inserted we can search for any specific entry by word, number, or we can define search rules such as is, isn't, begins with, ends with, contains, is>than, and is<than. Searches can be limited to case sensitive only, but the default ignores case.

DAtabase also has the ability to view information in list format. This list is an overview of the current file's contents and is intended to let you jump to a selected record from within the list. Often this can work faster then the search feature if you are looking for a specific entry.

There are many other options are available within DAtabase including locking a file to protect privacy, autosave every ?? minutes, pause time when browsing, and still more.

## • **Printing Records/Exporting**

We can print the record exactly as it appears on screen with picture, the text only, in mailing label format, or in list format with intelligent column sizing. We can print all records, a fixed range of records, or only pre-marked records.

DAtabase uses the standard Macintosh Printing techniques, plus adds true thumbnails for any file. Using thumbnails you can print 20 or 30 DAtabase windows per page.

The information within a single field can be moved into any word processor or desktop publishing program using cut & paste. If you want to move groups of fields or whole files, the program can export to several popular programs including 4th Dimension, Excel, File, FileMaker, Full Impact, FullWrite, Double Helix, More, Word, WordPerfect, Works, WriteNow, or set up custom export formats. DAtabase will produce a correctly formatted text file for the particular application. Of course, you can also export to any program that supports the above formats.

The program will print in color on an ImageWriter II, ImageWriter LQ, and the LaserWriter printers in normal black & white.

## • **Conclusion**

DAtabase is a very powerful data base program in convenient desk accessory format. It is well designed, complete, and performs perfectly.

The fact that it is a DA does not seem to limit its power. DAtabase can easily replace many normal desk accessories, but the amount of options available makes it capable of many jobs usually reserved for free standing applications.

When you open a Database file, memory is checked for free space. If possible the entire file is placed in memory which insures very fast action when functions are selected. If there is not enough free memory, DAtabase loads portions of the file into memory as it is needed. While this does slow things down a little bit, it does allow files substantially larger than can be handled by other DA's. It is possible to set up a DAtabase file that is 20 Mbytes or more, according to the program's author.

The manual is well written with the first chapter explaining computer and data base terminology. The quick start tutorial chapter that takes you through each step of using the program. Another section explains how to create Xtra Features. The manual ends with a quick reference, tips & tactics, and an index. The index could use some work, I found it difficult at times to find where in the manual I read about a certain feature.

Preferred Publishers seems willing to support the product. The manual includes an 800 technical support number, a BBS support number, and the company's address on Compuserve (76566,2014) and GEnie (Whitman). I can be reached on MacNET (StewartDw) to answer some questions.

DAtabase is compatible with System version 6.0. The program is compatible with Multifinder, Finder, or Switcher. The program is quicker under Multifinder. It will operate (according to Preferred Publishers) on a Macintosh 512E, but is optimized for use of the Macintosh Plus or higher machines.

DAtabase (\$99.95)(NCP) is available from Preferred Publishers, 5100 Poplar Ave, Suite 706, Memphis TN 38137. It is one of those excellent programs from a small company that no Macintosh user should really be without.

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Optional Artwork to Support Article

**Address Book**

☐ Business Contact      ☐ Customer  
☐ Sales Lead      ☐ Supplier

**First Name**  **Position**

**Last Name**

**Street**

**City**  **State**  **Zip Code**

**Dial Phone** **Phone Number**  **BILLINGS**  
**Time**  **Rate**

This is our sample address database as seen in the Builder.

This is our finished address database as seen in the desk accessory.

This is our finished address database as seen in the desk accessory.