

if:X Forms Designer

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if:X Forms Designer by Softview is, from beginning to end, quick and easy to learn and use. The manual is logically arranged and the text is simply written in a form very close to outline rather than prose. At times it borders on the skimpy, but if you are patient in your search, you will find answers to your questions either in the manual or on-line in the tutorial program. The software loads easily and opens ready to use promptly. Also included in the package was a really great scale with picas, points, inches and a leading gauge. This gizmo is really handy in many programs!

The "Read Me" text says that if:X provides two fonts, Chicago 9-point and Times 12-point, which should be installed with the FontDA Mover prior to running the tutorial or the Forms Designer application. The 9 point Chicago is used in the tear off menus to save space on the screen and the Times is used for the tour. I thought with my ATM and a jillion or so fonts I would not have to worry, so went merrily on my way. I did not get very far before a note came on my screen asking me to go back and install these.

An on-line tour created by Animated Films is included. This walks you through all the commands, definitions, and elements you will encounter within the application. You will have a good, basic understanding of how to get started when you finish it. In fact, I did the tour twice; once when I first opened the program and again about a week later. The second time through I discovered all the things I had missed the first time through and had been stewing about. Great help!

{Capture pix 1 here}

Throughout the time I worked with this package, I floundered a bit with the "view" information trying to figure out the sizes displayed on the screen. I would display the wrong one then get in deeper and deeper as I tried to correct it. I'm sure practice here would make a world of difference.

The one place it did have a bit of a fight was with the changing nature of the cursor as it moved across the display screen. I have included a chart of the various appearances of the cursor depending on just what you want to do and where it is located on the display screen. There is nothing really wrong here, except it is a bit touchy and I kept getting the wrong cursor when working in tight quarters. Would like to see menu selections or key commands which would determine attributes of the cursor and would not change until the operator wished it to. That way you could have your cake and eat it too - to use a tiresome phrase. On the one hand the cursor would change depending on where it is, or could be limited with specific commands. Maybe this capability is there. I did not find it in the time I had to work on this. Practice, again, I'm sure would help.

{Capture pix 2 here}

Establishing lines, cells, spacing, etc., is really slick. Rather like sketching out a form by establishing the number of spaces (cells) needed, the size of the finished forms, the names of the different blocks of information, and then telling the program to clean it up and make it look pretty. And it's done!! I printed out several forms and found them quite neat and looking professional.

if:X has excellent menu controls with tear-off menus several layers deep that could then be moved around on the screen to where they would be most convenient to use. This feature was especially useful when establishing type styles and attributes. It is possible to select the text from a series of cells anywhere on the page and then change the text attributes for the entire group. Combining this feature with the tear-off menus makes working with text VERY easy. You are assured of having all the text in your form consistent.

A Form Symbols folder is included with the package for things necessary to forms development, such as check boxes and an assortment of arrows. It is installed as a replacement to your Scrapbook file (a delicate procedure if you wish to preserve your current Scrapbook file). Or there is a MacPaint file with the same symbols that can be used if you have MultiFinder capabilities.

Overall, I would give this little program a "terrific" rating. It would be useful in most offices (large or small) with a moderate number of on-line forms to be completed. The individual forms can be designed to fit the exact amount of information you need to type into each (or write, but this program is really aimed at on-screen forms). The controls are accurate and fine enough to please all but the most critically demanding. It is easy for the non-artist/designer to develop and produce sharp looking, easy-to-use, custom tailored forms for a company of almost any size. Collect your company forms, practice a bit and you'll be on your way.