

VbReader User's Manual

V1.2

Introduction

VbReader is an off-line reader program written in Visual Basic and intended to provide a simple and reliable off-line reader for the average user, in a Windows 3.1 environment.

The program processes mail packets conforming to the Quick Mail format.

It incorporates the features needed to unpack mail packets, read the messages, write replies and generate a mail packet containing the replies. The interface was designed to be simple and easy to understand and use.

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.

This program is "Freeware". Registration is not required. The author would like that users send him Email at the following address, to comment on the program, suggest improvements, etc. The author intends to be very responsive to user requests.

Send Email to:

daniel.page@canrem.com

or

Daniel Page, user at Canada Remote Systems BBS

Requirements

The user requires the following:

- Windows 3.1
- Pkzip and Pkunzip data compression software
- Communication program
- VGA or better video monitor (800x600 resolution preferred)
- Although the program will run on a 286, a 386 is preferred

Installation

-Create a directory on your hard drive. Name it READER or some other appropriate name. For example:

```
md c:\reader
```

-Copy the **reader.zip** file to this directory. Make this directory your current Directory. Unzip the distribution file: (pkunzip must be in your path)

```
copy a:\reader.zip c:\reader  
cd \reader  
pkunzip *.zip
```

-The distribution file contains the following files:

reader.exe	; VbReader Program
vbrun100.dll	; Visual Basic Dynamic Link Library
dandll.dll	; Custom Dynamic Link Library
threed.vbx	; 3d Controls VB extensions
news.bat	; Batch file to display bbs news bulletins
news.pif	; Pif file to display bbs news bulletins
welcome.bat	; Batch file to display the bbs welcome screen
welcome.pif	; pif file to display the welcome screen
explode.pif	; pif file to launch pkunzip
compress.pif	; pif file to launch pkzip
8514oem.fon	; Large Terminal Font
vgaoem.fon	; Small Terminal Font

Additional Files:

services.pif ; Sample Pif file to display the services data
files.pif ; Sample Pif file used to launch the files display editor
tagfile.txt ; text file containing tag lines

- Invoke the Windows Fonts installation program from the Windows Control Panel. Choose the **Add** option. Direct the program to search in the **reader** directory. It will display the following: **Terminal font for the IBM 8514** and **Terminal [US] [Set #6]**. Click on the two fonts 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. You may then cancel the installation of the new font.

NOTE: In order to function properly, the program requires that **BOTH fonts be installed.**

- You may wish to copy the *.dll files and the *.vbx files to your **windows\system** directory, although the program will function without this step. If you do copy those files, you may delete them from the **reader** directory. Copying those files to your system directory will allow other Visual Basic programs to use them.

- In order to properly display the ANSI graphics that are usually included in the Bulletins files from the BBS, you must load the ANSI driver provided with your dos operating system. This is done by editing your **config.sys** file. Add the following line:

device=c:\dos\ansi.sys

- In order to allow VbReader to invoke the Pkzip and Pkunzip utilities, the location of those files must be in your **Path** statement in your **autoexec.bat** file. Alternatively, you may copy those utilities directly in the **reader** directory. An other option is to modify the **pif** files to point to the proper directories.

- Add the **reader.exe** program to a program group in the windows program manager.

-This completes the installation.

- If you edited your **config.sys** or **autoexec.bat** files, reboot your system to allow the changes to take effect.

Initial StartUp of VbReader

To start VbReader, you may double-click on **reader.exe** with the file manager, or double click on the icon in a program group.

Initial Configuration

When the program is first started, it will look for a configuration file (**reader.ini**). 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:

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.

Fonts

Two font choices are provided: **small font** and **large font**. The small font is suitable for full screen viewing in systems using VGA resolution. The large font is intended for full screen viewing in systems using Super VGA (or better) resolution. In such systems, the small font may be used when the program is used in windowed mode.

Colors

The color options allow you to choose background and foreground colors independently of each other. These colors are used for the display screen, and the list boxes. Click on the desired colors and the result is displayed in the sample text box to allow you to judge the result.

Once you have configured the options, click the **Done** button. The program 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 until the mail screen is displayed. We are now ready to open a mail packet. **However, before we do, you should invoke the second configuration menu.**

Complete Configuration

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

Your Name:

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

Your Tag Line:

This is your default tag line.

Tag File Name:

The name of a file containing tag lines. This file must reside in the directory listed in the first configuration menu. VbReader comes with a file containing 4500 tag lines. This file should be moved in the TagLines directory, or the TagLines directory should be changed to point to the location of this file. By default, the file name is Tagfile.txt. 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.

Your Signature Lines:

This text box contains the signature text which will be appended to the end of the messages you write.

Default BBS ID:

Finally, this menu allow you to specify a default BBS name.

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

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

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** program shipped with windows. You may specify your favorite editor. 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.

ex: deskedit.exe

or

c:\ndw\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. Normaly, this pif file will contain the name of the editor and will launch the editor in Windowed mode. See the example pif files provided (**files.pif** and **services.pif**).

Services Editor:

This editor s7 election is used to display the services data files downloaded from the BBS. See the **files editor** selection above for details in configuring this option.

Now return to the main configuration menu. Click on the forth item, **Fido Mode**.

FidoMode:

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.

We are done with the configuration. Do not forget to click the last option, **Save Configuration to Disk**.

Opening a Mail Packet

Click on the File menu. At this point, two items are enabled: Open Mail Packet, and Create Replies Packet. Click on the Open Mail Packet item. The program will look in the work directory for existing data. 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. However, since at this time you do not have any data in the work directory, the program will directly invoke a file dialog box. The box will display the contents of the download directory. Select a mail packet.

Once a mail packet is selected, the program will launch Pkunzip in a dos window. The packet will be expanded and the files installed in the work directory. Once the expansion process is complete, you may read the messages.

Reading Messages

Click on the View Items menu option. A list of options appear.

Personal Mail

Clicking on this option will cause the program to search for 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.

Join Conference

Clicking on this item will cause a list of conferences to be displayed. The program will display only conferences in which there are messages to read. The list also displays the number of messages in each conference. Double-click on the desired conference. At this point, 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.

New Files

This menu item will cause the program to invoke the editor program selected in the **Files Editor** configuration option. The default is Write.exe, the editor bundled with windows. 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.

BBS News

This option will launch a dos window and will cause the bbs News file to be displayed in this window. If the news file contains ANSI colors and graphics, those will be displayed, provided that **ansi.sys** is loaded in your config.sys file. At any time, you may interrupt the display by typing **cntrl-c**.

Services

If services were include in the packet, a list will appear listing the services included in the mail packet. Double Clicking on the list item will launch the editor specified in the **Services Editor** option in the configuration menu. The selected editor will then display the services data.

Welcome Screen

Like the BBS News menu, this option launches a dos window and displays the BBS welcome screen, if this screen was included with your mail packet. Again, you must have ansi.sys loaded to allow colors to be displayed. After the screen is displayed, type **<enter>** to close the window.

Goodbye Screen

Like the BBS News menu, this option launches a dos window and displays the BBS goodbye screen, if this screen was included with your mail packet. Again, you must have ansi.sys loaded to allow colors to be displayed. After the screen is displayed, type **<enter>** to close the window.

Managing the Reader Screen

Once in the read screen, you may select messages to view by one of two methods, mouse or keys.

Mouse Method

First, you may use the horizontal scroll bar at the bottom right of the screen. Clicking on the buttons at either end will select the next or previous message in the conference. 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.

Keys

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.

Note that 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.

Under the scroll bar, you will see a button labeled **Message List**. This button will display the message list, where you may select a message by double clicking on it, or by pressing the ENTER key.

Note that all controls displayed in the reader screen have ALT Keys assigned to them. Each control has an underlined letter in it's caption. To activate a control, Press the ALT key and the underlined letter.

Entering a Reply

Starting the Process

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

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.

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.

Other Displays

At the bottom of the reply screen you will note a number of display fields. They are used to display information about your message. This includes the conference number, the time and date of your message, and the message number of the message you are replying to.

Editing Commands

The editor is not very complex but 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.

Once text is selected, you may delete by using the **delete** key, or cut or copy it to the clipboard by using the **Edit** menu. 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.

The text will automatically wrap at the right edge of the screen. Using the **enter** key will move the insertion point immediately to the next line.

Tabs ar10

e inserted by typing the **cntrl Tab** key sequence. That is because the Tab keystroke is used to navigate between screen objects and controls.

File Commands

While in the editor window, you may save the displayed text or insert a text file in the editor window by selecting the appropriate option in the **File** menu in the menu bar.

Tag Line Selection

Once your message is complete, you may wish to select an appropriate tag line. 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 tag line. Clicking on the arrow button on the right of the text box will cause a list of tag lines to be displayed. If the number of tag lines exceeds the area available to display them, a scroll bar will also appear. Select the desired tag line 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 tag lines in you tag file. Also Note that the tag line is not displayed in the edit screen. It is appended to the end of your message when you save it.

Saving the message

When you are done with the editing, click on the **Save** button. A dialog box will appear asking you to confirm. 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.

Entering a New Message

You would use this option when you wish 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:

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 **Display Item** menu item in the menu bar at the top of the screen. When the list is displayed, select a conference by clicking on it. Note that the list will only display the first 3000 conferences listed in the mail packet control file.

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.

Editing Your Replies

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 **Your Replies** menu 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.

The main difference is in the way that the edited reply is processed. When you complete the editing of a reply, if you click on the Message List button bar, the displayed list will contain an additional entry. This is the newly edited reply. The old reply will be marked ******edited reply******. Should you select an entry marked in this manner, the text screen will read KILLED.

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.

Creating a Replies Packet

Select the **Create Replies Packet** option of the Files menu. This will launch the compression program which will compress your replies and move the resulting file to the uploads directory. 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.

VbReader Limits:

Number of Conferences containing messages: 700
Number of Conferences listed in the View List menu: 3000
Number of Messages per Conference 700
Number of Replies 700
Number of TagLines displayed in the list box 1000

Enhancements and Bug Fixes from 1.00

- 1- Fixed problem with multiline Signature Text
- 2- Improved Error detection and reporting in file handling functions
- 3- Improved keyboard handling for manipulation of controls
- 4- Improved choice of screen colors
- 5 Added Services processing
- 6- Added Message re-editing feature
- 7- Added Programable editor choices
- 8- Modified Screen wrap handling
- 9- Added filtering of HighAscii characters in subject field
- 10- Added automatic sorting of messages