ORATOR/db

Ver 2.00

Database Reader

by

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Distribution

Foreward

Orator started life nearly 2 years ago now as a simple learning excersize in how to use VB. I quickly got hooked on the language and decided to make a go out of turning it into a cheap ShareWare product. Orator has been long praised for its simplicity and has always attracted the beginner to BBSing.

Orator ver 2.00 represents a continuation of this theme with the product assuming a two products for the price of one strategy. The existing format of one packet at a time' reader has got a bit of a face lift and some new functions added, whilst the major change to 2.00 is the addition of a new database style reader.

It is hoped that this Orator/db version will bring some simplicity back into the business of database reading.

I hope you enjoy using Orator as much as I enjoy writing and supporting it.

Contents

FEATURES

1)   Message purging by date or number of messages per conference. Only read messages are purged.

2)   Messages can be flagged pending, forcing them to remain in the conference until the flag is cleared. Allows important messages to be retained overriding the purge parameters.

3)   Exported replies remain in the database for a user defined length of time. Allows a reply to be resent in the event that it goes missing in the net somewhere.

4)   Signature file handling is a feature allowing a text file to be appended to the bottom of every message sent. Each conference can also have its own special signature file.

5)   Reply Headers allows a user defined text file to be inserted at the top of every reply made. This reply header file can contain various @ signs which Orator replaces at run time to produce for example a line like "John Smith was saying to Dave Brown on 13/05/94". Each conference can have its own special header file.

6)   Messages can be sorted by Subject, Sender, Receiver, Message number and date.

7)   Message sorting can also be changed on the fly' during reading.

8)   Each conference can have its own message sorting, allowing you to setup say an Internet email conference to sort in message number order, as opposed to say an ordinary echomail conference would have sorting by maybe subject. Orator ignores case and RE:' in any subject sort.

9)   User can define the font and fontsize used to read and reply mail in.

10)   Replies can be entered at the same time reading proceeds allowing a reply to be built up from information from various messages.

11)   Each conference can have unique parameters for purging. IE A moderator may set a conference he/she moderates to retain all messages for one month whilst other conferences are set to purge messages within 4 days.

12)   Conference profiles can be setup to tell Orator which conferences are echomail, Fido Echomail, Fido Netmail, Internet Email etc. This helps Orator to automatically find Email address and Netmail addresses when replying.

13)   Online email/Netmail/Rime address book allows user to select an address whilst entering a reply.

14)   Address snatch facility is a button allowing the user to steal and address from the text body of a message and place it in the online address book.

15)   Carbon Copy feature enables the sending of replies/messages to more than one person. No real limit exists on the number of people a message can be sent to.

16)   Large Text files (UUENCODED FILES) etc can be attached to messages and then orator will send them as messages. Saves having to insert the text into the message as it will be automatically appended to the end of the message. If the text file is too large Orator automatically breaks it into several pieces.

17)   Built in Spell Checker.

18)   Forward function gives the user the ability to Forward' a message to another user /conf /BBS.

19)   Replies can be sent to one BBS whilst the user is reading mail in another. Replies can be sent to as many difference BBS at the same time.

20)   Tagline theft enables the taking of not only tags at the bottom of messages but also en masse' theft from the middle of messages direct to the tagline file.

21)   Dump feature allows for messages in a conference to be dumped' in a specific order to a file. This is especially useful where UUENCODED files are split over several message numbers and are not necessarily in the right order. This enables them to be correctly written in the right order and then easy UUDECODING can take place.

22)   Write feature gives the ability to write a whole message or just a portion of a message to a file.

23)   Online folders facility means that those precious messges can be archived for later reference.

24)   Unlimited number of conference support.

25)   Unlimited message length.

26)   Expanding network of online Registration sites.

27)   Support available over Internet or direct from Authors BBS, see below.

INSTALLATION

1)   Unzip the contents of the archive to a temporary directory.
2)   Run from Windows the program **SETUP** in the temporary directory where you unzipped the files to.
3)   The rest is rather self explanantory, but remember to configure correctly before actually running Orator.
4)   Ensure you have ANSI.SYS or other similar program running in your Config.sys

A few things to remember before continuing.

Remember to ensure that your _DEFAULT.PIF file is set to allow windowed operation. IE Not full screen. If you dont then Orator may not unzip/zip files in discrete minimized windows.

If you have a PIF file setup for you archiver ensure it too is setup to allow windowed operation.

Avoid using frontends for your archiver in Windows. Ensure you use the direct DOS command when setting up your command strings in Configuration. (SEE BELOW)

Configuration

Described below are the fields comprising the configuration screen.

Default QWK path
Give the full path and filename for where Orator can find your QWK packets for importation into its databases.

Default REP path
Give the full path for where Orator can place your replies (.REP)

PKUNZIP Command
Give the full command for extracting an archive. Include in the command %1 to represent the name of the archive and %2 to represent the name of the path where the archive should be extracted to. EG

C:\PKZIP\PKUNZIP %1 %2

....will extract %1 archive to %2 library.

PKZIP Command
As above, but the %1 is the name of the archive to be created and %2 is the name of the libarary from where Orator creates the archive. EG:

C:\PKZIP\PKZIP -A %1 %2

....will zip the contents of library %2 into archive %1.

Signature File
This is the file that is appended to the bottom of all messages you enter, unless you define the conference you enter the message into as having a special signature file. I use for instance the following:

C:\ORATOR.DB\SIGNAT.TXT

where SIGNAT.TXT has :

Regards
Nick Dyer   nick.dyer@evaware.org

as its contents.

Reply Header File
This file's contents are inserted at the top of every reply unless the conference you are entering the reply into has it's own defined reply header. I use for example:

C:\ORATOR.DB\REPHDR.TXT

where REPHDR.TXT has:

@SENDER@ said to @RECEIVER@ on @DATETIME@

The @ commands are replaced with their actual values at runtime so that for example replying to a message from Joe Bloggs to John Smith on the 23/05/1994 would give you a header of

JOE BLOGGS said to JOHN SMITH on 23/05/1994.

The complete list of @Signs is as follows:

@SENDER@ for the sender of the message
@RECEIVER@ for the receiver of the message
@SUBJECT@ for the subject
@DATETIME@ for the date and time the original message was sent

No of Packets to keep.
When Orator imports a packet into its databases, it is no longer required. However, Orator does not simply delete the packet. It renames the packet to *.001 for example. You can here specify how many old packets Orator should keep. IE Three would keep *.001, *.002 and *.003.

Default to unread
Setting this means that orator automatically on startup, defaults to reading only unread messages. You can then after reading all unread' messages change Orator over reading read as well.

Retain Msgs for xxx Days or No of Msgs XXX
In these two boxes you decide whether you want Orator to retain read messages' for XXX number of days *or* retain a max number of XXX read messages per conference. When you Purge the database (See Below) Orator uses these parameters to decide how many read messages to keep. Note that you can define separate paramters for each conference if you wish. These parameters are used if no conference specific paramters are present. Note the number of days is counted from the date of Import into the message base and not since the mesasge was created.

Retain Replies for XXX days
State here how many days replies that have already been exported from the database should be kept for. Basically when you create a reply it is stored in the database. It is not exported unless you say so when you shutdown Orator. A reply that has been exported will be retained for however many days you state here.

Read sort Order.
Decide here the default order in which messages should be read in in each conference. You can state later (See blow) individual requirements for each conferences.

Colour Palettes
Indicate here your colour preferences for each style of text. Note to change colour simply double click on each colour and then choose from the list. The text types are as follows:

Msg Fore-Colour
The colour for the forreground of Message reading. IE The colour of the text.

Msg Quoted
This is the colour you would like text that is being quoted to appear in. IE A person replying to anothers message will have parts of the first persons message in quotes. This text will be shown in the colour stated here. I use Green.

Msg Back colour.
This is the background for the two above colours. I use White.

Rep Fore/Back Colour.
These two colours are used in the reply editor.

Msg Reply Font/Size
State here the font to use and font size when reading messages and replying. Note you will only see Monospaced fonts. There is no point in allowing Proportionally spaced fonts as the receiver at the other side will only have Monofonts. Remeber to use a fontsize that only allows about 76 chars per line as this is the accepted standard for line lengths.

Hit OK to save your preferences or Cancel to quit without.

Getting Started
Before you can use Orator you must with the use of a suitable communications package download a QWK packet from a BBS. A QWK packet contains all your mail and support files to be used by Orator to enable you to read and reply to mail.

QWK readers like Orator are basically divided into two types. There are one at a time' readers which allow you to read packets one at a time and prepare your replies and messages for uploading to the BBS. The other type of reader, imports the messages, into a database and allows you to keep these messages for a pre-determinate time even after reading them. Orator and its sister product do both of these. Orator is a two for the price of one reader. This particular copy does the latter, IE is a database reader.

When you have configured and installed Orator as per above then you may import your first packet. **NOTE** Orator will import any .REP files it finds in the REP directory if it recognises them as for a known BBS (A BBS you have imported packets from). This importation is done automatically when you start Orator.

Importing Packets
From the main Bar menu choose **FILE** and then **CHOOSE BBS.** A dialogue box will appear showing a list of BBS systems you have previously imported packets from and are known to Orator. If this is the first time you have run orator then *NO* BBS systems will appear. Choose the **IMPORT** button to import your QWK packet you downloaded from the BBS. If you have correctly completed your Configuration for where Orator can find all QWK packets then the QWK packet(s) will appear in the dialogue box. Simply choose the packet (File) and press OK.

Orator will then commence to start the archiver (In a minimized DOS window if your configuration is correct) and extract the files in the QWK packet to a work directory.

When the extraction is complete the DOS window will dissappear and then Orator will inform you that it is "Loading Conferences".

NOTE : THE FIRST IMPORT OF A PACKET YOU DO FROM A BBS WILL TAKE A LOT LONGER THAN SUBSEQUENT IMPORTS AS ORATOR HAS A LOT OF WORK TO DO SETTING UP CONTROL RECORDS WHEN LOADING CONFERENCES, DO NOT BE ALARMED THIS IS NORMAL.

After a while this message will dissappear and a new message will appear to inform you that it is importing Messages with a progress percentage counter.

When Importation is complete you are free to import a packet from another BBS or simply choose the BBS that will now appear in the list by pressing **CHOOSE** to start reading mail. Note, you can import packets direct from the command line. Ensure you are in Orators program directory and type : **win orator /IN:C:\QWK\EVAWARE.QWK** replacing the name of the qwk packet with your own path and name. It is very important that you are in Orators program directory when you do this and that you use the full drive and path to the qwk. Orator returns to DOS after importing the packet.

Reading Mail

When you have chosen a BBS Orator will firstly show you any Personal Unread messages first irrespective of which conference they are from. They are also not sorted in any order requested by you. IE Not subject order if that is your preference. The messages appear in the Order they were discovered by the door that scanned your packet and the order they were imported into the Database.

When you have read all your personal mail then Orator proceeds onto each conference in turn showing you the conference contents allowing you to read the messages. If you have the Unread flag set (**FILE Menu**) then Orator shows only the unread mail in each conference.

When reading Unread mail only, if a hop is done to the next conference and no unread mail is found Orator will ask you if it should proceed to the next conference containing unread mail. Answering YES will start Orator scanning from conference to conference looking for unread mail, stopping when unread mail is found. If you answer NO then Orator shows all mail in the current conference, read and unread, it also clears the UNREAD check on the **FILE** menu.

When Orator is scanning from Conference to Conference looking for unread mail, and Orator reaches the last conference, you will be asked if you want Orator to recommence the scan for unread mail from the beginning again. Answering NO will force Orator to load the first Conference in the list with any mail both read and unread. The UNREAD check is also cleared.

Whilst reading mail the following buttons appear on the screen and have the following functions:

Print
Prints the current message to the printer.

Steal
Steals any tagline that can be located on the current message and shows it to you for you to approve it be appended to the tagline file.

Reply
Allows you to enter a reply to the current message. The message will appear in the Reply Editor preceded by the senders initials to signify your quoting of his message. IE Joe Bloggs writes in a message

I am fed up.

This text appears in the reply editor if you reply to this message as

JB> I am fed up.

See below for Information on Replying.

List
Gives a list of all the messages in the current Conference and allows the user to select a message in that list for reading.

Search
Search the Current BBS or just the Current conference for a text string. The messages found are shown to the user.

Save
Save a message to the folders. See archiving and folders.

Write
Write a message to a file.

Dump
A user may dump one or messages from the current conference to a file. The messages are dumped to the file in the order the user selects them. This is very useful when reconstructing UUENCODED files from messages where the messages are not in the correct order.

Confer
Press this to select from the list of Conference available for the current BBS with mail in them. Note, only active conferences will be shown here.

New
Press this to enter a new message.

Pending
This is a toggle function. If it is selected then clicking this button again turns it off. Flagging a message as pending stops Orator removing the message until the falg is cleared. IE A message you wish to reply to later on when you have time can be set to pending and you can rest assured that the message will not be purged or removed by Orator.
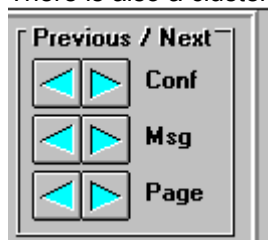
Fwd
Use this to forward a message to one or more other people.

Del
Delete immediately the current message.

There is also a cluster of buttons on the message reading page:

The top two hop forward and back through active conferences (Conferences with mail in them). The Middle two hope forward and back through the messages within the current conference. When you are reading the last message in the conference and press **Next Message** then the next conference is automatically loaded. The final two buttons are the previous and next page buttons.

At the top of the message reading page there is a bar menu:

File
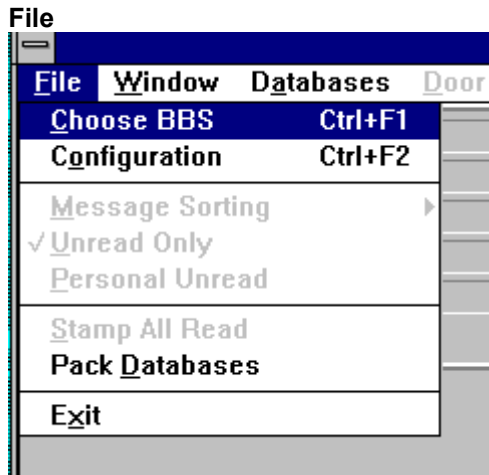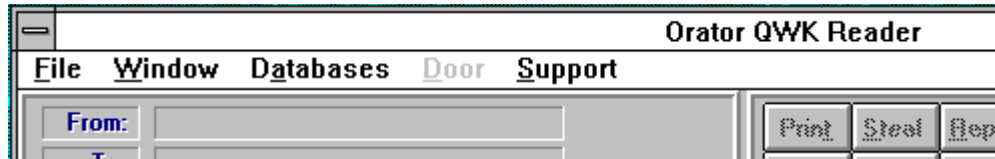
Not all the parts of the menu are always enabled. It depends upon whether you have a BBS chosen or not. The example to the left has no BBS chosen.

Choose BBS
Select this to choose a BBS to read messages in.

Configuration
Used to setup Orator to your personal preferences. See above for information on configuration.

Message Sorting
Select this to change the sorting of messages. The setting here is not saved but simply allows the sorting to be changed on the fly. If you want the sorting default to change then you will have to use Configuration to setup your preferred Message Sorting.

Unread Only
When checked Orator will show only unread messages in each conference.

Personal Unread
Use this to hop to only unread messages to you.

Stamp all Read
Will stamp all messages for the current BBS as read. Excludes messages stamped as Pending.

Purge Database

Use this to purge your database of old messages. You will have defined in Configuration how many read messages' should be kept for each conference or alternatively a length of time in days that read messages should be kept. Orator will use that information to delete messages that are for example too old and then will repack your Database building new indexes. This process can be quite lengthy (A few minutes) and you may want to do it during the night. To do it during the night as part of an event, you can simply use a command line parameter as follows:
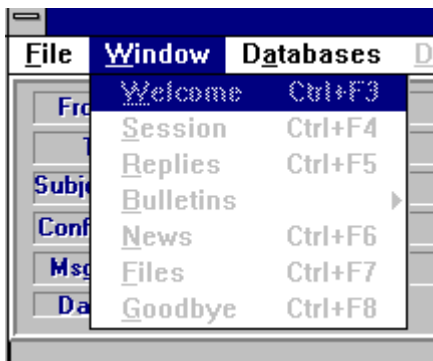
Ensure you are in Orators program directory and type **win orator /PACK**

This will pack the databases and return to DOS afterwards allowing your nightly event to continue.

Exit

Self explanatory. Exit Orator. Any replies created in the session are exported if you wish. Note Orator imports .REPS automatically at the start of each session.

Window

This menu has various parts enabled dependant upon what information for a chosen BBS is available. The above example is when no BBS is chosen. The items in the menu have the following meanings: Note the viewer used is a simple Ansi viewer called ORATVIEW which relys on ANSI.SYS being installed in your CONFIG.SYS.

Welcome

Any welcome screen for the current BBS is Displayed when you click on this Menu Option.

Session

If there is any Session information available for the last mail run you did then it will be shown when you click this option.

Replies

Select this option to manage replies for this BBS and other BBS systems. You can see both new replies not exported and all old exported replies still present in the Database. See Reply Management below

Bulletins

Any bulletins from the chosen BBS can be viewed when this option is selected.

News

BBS News from the chosen BBS is shown when this option is selected.

Files

Any new files information in the last packet imported for this BBS will be shown behind this option.

Goodbye

The Goodbye screen is shown when you click on this menu option.

Databases

Folders

See Archiving and folders below for more information. Basically Folders are used to save messages to for future reference. Selecting this option here will start up the Folder Maintenance system where you can retrieve messages Saved under various headings.

Email Addresses.

Use this to enter the Email address book maintenance system where you can enter and delete Email addresses.

Conf Profiles

Each conference can be defined as a specific type of conference. EG Fido style, Fido Netmail, Rime, Internet Private email etc etc etc. You can also setup individual conference profiles to tell Orator how long to keep messages in the conferences if it is to differ from the system wide default entered in Orator configuration. See Conference Profiles below.

Reply Management

Reply Management is available by selecting **Window** on the main bar menu and then selecting **Replies**. This will only work if you have selected a BBS.

The list box shows a list of all messages fitting the paramters chosen. IE All unexported Messages for the current BBS only.

There are two Check Boxes at the bottom of the Dialogue Box.

Show Un-exported Only
When selected (The default) then only new unexported replies/messages are shown. Deselect this and all replies since the last purge are shown as well enabling you to choose one for resending.

Show for this BBS only?
Normally this option is selected in which case you see only replies for the current BBS, Deselect this to see replies for all BBS systems.

There are also a cluster of buttons on the dialogue box with the following meanings:

Delete
Select a reply to delete and press this to physically delete the message.

Show
Select a reply/message and press this to show the message using Windows Notepad. From there you can print it out if you wish.

Re-Edit
Use this to re-edit a message if you wish to amend its contents.

New
Used to enter a new message. See Replying below.

Cancel
Self explanatory. Used to exit This dialogue box.

Replying

Selecting the **New** button whilst reading, the **Reply** button whilst reading mail, or selecting the **New or Re-Edit** buttons from the Reply Management screen, all end up with the same screen being shown afterwards. This screen is used to enter the details of the recipient of the message you are about to send. Note replies are exported and .REP packets created when you exit Orator.

On the dialogue box are the following items:

BBS
Select here the BBS you want to send the message to. It defaults to the current BBS.

TO
You supply here the persons name who is to receive the message (NOT their email address etc) EG: JOHN SMITH if you are replying to mail then this will probably have been filled in for you by Orator with information from the original Message to which you are replying.

SUBJECT
Enter a max of 25 chars of Subject text here.

Conference
You must choose a conference to enter you message into. It will probably have already been filled in with a current conference number if there is one otherwise enter the conference number or use the browse button to make a selection.

When you Tab out of this box (Technical term for this is cause the text box to lose focus) Orator checks the Conference profile to see if you have maybe defined this conference for Private Email or Fido Netmail If you have then Orator will enable the box below for you to enter the email address or Netmail Address. You can also use the browse button to choose from your Online address book for the recipients address.

Select the **OK** button to proceed with Message entry.

After hitting **OK** a new dialogue box appears showing a quick summary of the Recipient details entered so far. You can simply hit **OK** again to proceed to reply entry and the text editor, or select **CC** to send a carbon copy of the message to another recipient.

REPLY TEXT EDITOR
The reply editor has sizable borders. Set them so that the width of the editor using the current fontsize gives about 76 - 78 characters per line. Any more and Orator will simply truncate the lines. All box sizes and positions are remembered by Orator for later reference so you will only have to do this once.

File Attach Facility.
You can use a file attach facility to send a text file. Select **FILE** and then **ATTACH** Make your selection from the next dialogue box as to which File you wish to attach to your message and Orator will automatically append it to your message when you exit the editor and save your reply. If the text file is very long then Orator will cut the message into messages of 150 lines each.

Archiving and folders
Messages can be saved to user definable folders and later retrieved.

To save a message do as follows:

1. Whilst reading a message click on the **Save** button. A dialogue box appears.
2. Choose a Folder and select Save. If a folder does not exist then you can create one by pressing the Create Button and entering a name for the new folder.

To manage Folders choose **Databases** from the main Bar Menu and then select **Folders**, a dialogue box appears to manage folders.

Viewing the contents of a folder
Double Click on the Folder name in the list box at the top of the screen or click once and press **CHOOSE**

Deleting Folders.
Select the folder and press the delete button. A folder with messages in it cannot be deleted.

Showing Messages
View the contents of the folder as explained above and choose a message from the list box at the bottom of the dialogue box. Press **Show** to view the message using Windows Notepad.

Deleting Messages
Select a message and press the **Delete** button.

Conference Profiles

Use this to define for Orator the profile for conferences on the BBS systems you use. Reading messages can be a made a lot easier by careful tweaking of Conference profiles. EG Tell Orator which conference on a BBS is the Private Email conf etc etc so that Orator inserts automatically the address at the top of Messages.

To setup Profiles choose **Databases** from the main Bar Menu and then choose **Conf Profiles.** You are presented with a new dialogue box, the top half which has the conferences grouped into numerical groups of 250. All the active conferences (Those conferences with any messages in them) are shown under the section called **Active**. Choose which group you would like to locate your conference in for example to select conference 80 to setup as the Fido Netmail Conference, choose the group 0-249. Immediately upon choosing the group the lower listbox will show the conferences in the numerical group.

Select using the mouse the conference you wish to amend (Say in this case conference 80) and the details at the bottom of the screen immediately change to reflect the profile for the selected conference if any profile is found. Amend the profile if you so wish and dont forget to press **OK** to save the profile.