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A Variant of Q&A 5's 'Expand Field' Bug

ALEC MULVEY

I F you use Q&A 5.0 for DOS, you're probably aware by now of its "Expand Field" bug. This bug, also known as the "F6 bug," can cause Q&A to crash if you press F6 to expand a field in the Retrieve Spec when preparing to print a merge letter or mailing labels. What causes this is that enhancements such as fonts have not been appropriately inhibited in expanded fields in these Retrieve Specs as they are in "normal" database Retrieve Specs such as Search/Update mode. However, the bug bites only if there is a *default font for new documents* specified in Q&A Write 5.0's word processor.

The upshot of this is that **you cannot set a default font for Write documents**. Most Q&A 5.0 users should know this as it is well documented. To test for it, select *Write / Type Edit* from the Q&A Main menu and press Ctrl F9 (Assign Fonts). The screen should be clear. Although this seems extremely restrictive, it isn't. You can set any fonts you want for any documents, and then save those documents along with their font assignments. You just can't specify a global *default* font for *new* documents.
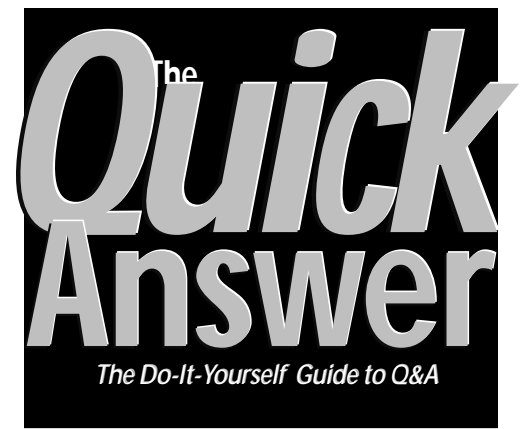
The evil variant

So much for the *documented* bug. Unfortunately, though, there is another variant of it—you lose font assignments in reports and Print Specs as well. It is very easy (and harmless) to reproduce. Here's how to do it.

1. In Q&A 5.0, find a report or print spec that uses assigned fonts.

2. Print the report or spec with changes: for example, *Report / Print a Report* and select your report.

3. When Q&A asks if you want to make temporary changes, select *Yes.*

4. Press F10 at the Retrieve Spec.

5. At the Column/Sort Spec, press Ctrl-F9 to display the Font Assignments screen. (If you don't have any fonts, assign one—any font will do).

6. Press F10 to return to the Column/Sort Spec, then press F9 to return to the Retrieve Spec.

Figure 1. Q&A 5.0's Ctrl-F9 Font Assignments screen. Don't press F8 to set font defaults for new documents.

```
                    FONT ASSIGNMENTS        User Manual, Pg. 5-59

  Font file name: D:\QA\HPLASER4.FNT

       Font name                    Abbr.  Point Pitch      Comments

Regular: CG Times Med (4L):12       CGMe12 12    P      HP 4 Internal

Font 1: CG Times Bld (4L):12        CGB112 12    P      HP 4 Internal
Font 2: CG Times Ita (4L):12        CGIt12 12    P      HP 4 Internal
Font 3: CG Times Bld Ita (4L):12    CGBI12 12    P      HP 4 Internal
Font 4:
Font 5:
Font 6:
Font 7:
Font 8:

                    Do Not Use in Q&A 5.0

Esc-Exit  F1-Help  F5-Copy default  F6-List fonts  F8-Make default F10-Continue
```

7. Go to any text field and press F6 to expand it, then press F6 again to close it again.

8. Again press F10 to return to the Column/Sort Spec, and Ctrl-F9 for the Font Assignments screen. You'll find that your assigned fonts are gone.

What does it mean?

Well, unlike the main F6 bug described earlier, this one has no serious

No Time Left!

If you're reading this on or before January 11, you must make your arrangements *now* if you want to attend The INTERNATIONAL Q&A USERS CONFERENCE 2001, January 12-14 in Irvine, California!

1. Call us at **800-780-5474** or 949-722-9127 to find out if we still have space available. Have your credit card ready.

2. Make whatever travel arrangements you may need.

3. Call the **Atrium Hotel** in Irvine and reserve your room. (The $80 group rate will apply depending on room availability.) Call 800-854-3012 or 949-833-2770.

We'd **really** love to see you at the grandest Q&A gathering ever!

—Tom Marcellus, Your Conference Host

Quick **Tip**: Create a 'Running Balance' Report

For certain kinds of data analysis, it can be very handy to have a report that shows a running balance of all the records included in the report—something along the lines of the report output shown here:

```
                                                 Running
Invoice  Invoice Date       Customer      Total  Balance
-------  ------------   ------------------ ------- ---------
3003     Feb 8, 1998    JAMES POGANY      $109.00  $109.00
3004     Feb 16, 1998   THERESA MOORE      $79.00  $188.00
3005     Feb 16, 1998   BOBBY NATHAN       $79.00  $267.00
3006     Feb 16, 1998   R D TIRA           $79.00  $346.00
3007     Feb 19, 1998   CHERYL LANE        $89.00  $435.00
3008     Mar 10, 1998   NEIL HAAS          $59.00  $494.00
3009     Mar 10, 1998   CHRISTIAN REUMILLER $108.00 $602.00
3010     Mar 10, 1998   CHRISTIAN REUMILLER $108.00 $710.00
3011     Mar 10, 1998   ERIC COVINGTON     $79.00  $789.00
3012     Mar 29, 1998   RICHARD K HAYNES  $138.00  $927.00
```

A report that produces a **Running Balance** column like this is surprisingly easy to create in any version of Q&A. Simply design your Column/Sort Spec this way:

```
    Invoice: 1AS
Invoice Date: 2
   Customer: 3
      Total: 4
```

When you've completed your Column/Sort Spec, press F8 (Q&A for DOS) for The Derived Column screen and fill out the first derived column this way:

```
Heading: Running!Balance
Formula:  #4 + #50
Column/Sort Spec: 50,F(M)
```

That's all there is to it!

The trick is in the derived column. As you can see, it's column 50, which makes it the last column in the report. When Q&A processes the first record in the report, column 50 is empty, so the Running Balance column will contain that record's Total (Invoice total in this case). In each subsequent record processed, that record's Total is added to the value already in column 50, so you get a running balance. You can use your Report Retrieve Spec to select any range of records and the Running Balance will always be correct for that range.

Tom Marcellus

Q&A and WinClip— Your Virtual Secretary

CLIFF SOBIN

I MAGINE a busy law office where each attorney, assisted by one or more secretaries or paralegals, is responsible for hundreds of files. Forty or more letters might be created and mailed every day by each attorney on behalf of multiple clients. Some of the correspondence consists of form letters requesting various things while other letters are original drafts. This describes our law firm. The following steps describe the way we *formerly* completed our routine correspondence tasks:

1. The attorney requests certain action to be taken.

2. The secretary finds the file folder. (Sometimes a task in itself!)

3. The secretary begins a new page at the end of a multi-page Microsoft Word document that contains all the correspondence efforts for the day. (For a variety of reasons, the one multi-page document composed of all the letters to many different individuals is our method of choice).

4. The secretary types in the address where the letter is to be sent. Sometimes the address is on the file's cover. Sometimes it must be ascertained from other sources.

5. The secretary types in what I call the "re" lines consisting of the date of the incident, the name of the defendant and the like from information that's in the file folder. (This information is also in Q&A, but that would involve switching screens and either memorizing the information or writing it down).

6. The secretary types the letter by reading the attorney's chicken scrawl, listening to dictation, or figuring out what to do on his or her own. The document could be a form letter or an original draft.

7. At the end of the day, the letters are printed, and copies are made for the file folders.

8. Each file is returned to the right cabinet. (Hopefully, nobody else has been looking for it in the meantime or taken it from the secretary before he or she's able to complete the correspondence.)

As you can see, a great deal of time is invested in retrieving and returning the file folders. What's more, the firm's comprehensive Q&A databases are *not* being employed to any real advantage here, and no easily retrievable computer record exists for reviewing a history of correspondence mailed on behalf of individual clients.

Furthermore, even our computer-proficient attorneys are not inclined to print their own letters because of the difficulty of entering address and "re" line information, not to mention formatting the documents for consistent professional-looking output.

Fortunately, through some application redesign and new programming—along with WinClip—we've found a simpler solution. Here's how we plan to manage our correspondence in the future.

1. We keep the file folder in the drawer.

2. We assemble the letter in Q&A using information contained in Q&A.

3. We create a record in Q&A of each letter sent.

4. We paste each letter into Word without the need for any manual formatting.

The Q&A application design takes care of steps 1, 2 and 3. WinClip for Q&A handles step 4.

The application design

Our law firm records each client matter (individual case handled for a client) as a record in a database named Case.dtf. Each Case record has a unique client number and contains all the information unique to that client matter. Ancillary databases store address information for our clients (Person.dtf), insurance companies (Insadd.dtf), adjusters (Adjuster.dtf), medical providers (Medadd.dtf), defense attorneys (Attorney.dtf), and so forth. The Case database uses XUserselectR and XLookup commands to retrieve the applicable names and unique identifier codes from the ancillary databases. Table 1 on the following page shows the information types which might be used in every letter our firm produces.

Except for the body of the letter, all the information required to assemble any letter already exists within our Q&A application. All we needed to do to simplify our correspondence production was to unlock it!

Information Type	Indent
Date	3.5 inches
Address	Left justified
Re: Lines	3.5 inches
Dear ?	Left justified
Body of letter	Each paragraph at .5 inch
Very truly yours	3.5 inches
Drafter/Secretary Initials	Left justified
CC to anyone	Left Justified
Enclosures	Left justified
Subject	Tracked in Q&A but not in letter

Table 1. Format settings for the various elements of a typical letter.

In the May 1998 issue of *The Quick Answer*, Alec Mulvey showed how to create an address block for use with WinClip. In a nutshell, you use Q&A programming to assemble the address components in a database record (name, street, city, state, and so forth) into a single address block field, then use WinClip to copy that block to the Windows Clipboard, from where it can be pasted into any Windows program.

For our efforts to be successful, though, we needed to build the *entire* letter in Q&A. For this purpose, we designed a Mail.dtf database and linked it to the main Case database by the client number. Every time a new Case record is created, we create a new matching Mail record as well. Any given Mail record can be found by searching for the client in Case, then invoking a macro to take the user to that case's Mail record. The macro "presses" F11 to copy the Client Number to Q&A's clipboard, exits Case, opens Mail in Search/Update mode, pastes the Client Number into the Retrieve Spec (F12), then "presses" F10 to display the record.

The basic requirements for "integrating" Q&A and Word for specialized correspondence tasks like ours is the proper placement of the Q&A-generated letter in the Word document and retaining the Word document's formatting.

We needed to assemble the first nine parts of the letter as defined in Table 1 in a separate left justified field which is then WinClipped (a new verb) to Word. Then, using a Word macro, the various lines are indented to the proper tab stop. For this, each line of the letter which is not to be left justified is preceded by a unique character that the Word macro can replace (Find / Replace) with a pre-determined number of tab stops. Our Word macro replaces the "~" character with seven tab stops and the "^" character with one tab stop. The end result is a letter with appropriate indentation for each information type as shown in Table 1.

The following steps are involved in assembling the letter. (Sample databases referred to are included in this month's download file for Online Edition subscribers):

Step 1. Obtain the relevant information. When the drafter selects "Create Letter" in Mail.dtf, the cursor goes to field #5 where an on-field-entry program performs a series of XLookups to retrieve relevant information from Case.dtf

into the appropriate Mail record fields. This information includes client identifiers such as name and social security number as well as Case attributes such as insurance company, insurance number, and assigned attorney initials. For the purposes of this example, the information is placed in fields #200 through #450 (see sample Mail.dtf field #5).

Step 2. The date is then placed in a text field (field #10 in the programming) in the format to be used in the printed letter. Since the date is indented 3.5 inches, the programming statement *#10= @Str("~" + #10)* sets the formatting for the Word document. (The Word macro will replace the "~" with seven tab stops.)

Step 3. The attorney is then prompted with a choice of classes of letters to be sent (to a client or insurer, for example). The "re" lines, "Dear ?" and addresses are created by the following programming:

```
#5=@Userselect("INS-Insurance,CLI-Client");
#5=@Left(#5,3);

If #5="INS" Then {#15=@Str("~ Re: "+@Str(#205 +" "+
#200)+"
"+"~D/A: "+ #210 +"
"+"~Cl#: "+#355+"
"+"~SS#: "+#240);
#20=@Str(#360 +" "+ #345);
XLookup("Insadd.dtf",#335,"x#20","x#220",#17)
};

If @Left(#5,3)="CLI"  then  {#15=@Str("~ Re:
"+@Str(#205+" "+#200)+"
"+"~D/A: "+#210);
#20=@Str(#245+" "+#200);
#17=#305};
```

This programming creates a Userselect list with two choices; INS-Insurance or CLI- Client. (You can have as many choices as needed.) Depending on the choice, the "re" lines are then created dynamically in field #15 from the information previously looked up from the Case file. Since the "re" lines are to be indented 3.5 inches, they are preceded by the character "~". They will appear as follows when pasted into the Word letter:

INS-Insurance Letter

```
~Re:  James Smith
~D/A: 4/23/98
~Cl#: WC-203-%42
~SS#: 123-45-6789
```

CLI-Client Letter

```
~Re:  James Smith
~D/A: 4/23/98
```

Once the choice is made as to the type of letter, the programming then places the appropriate *Dear ?* information by combining the salutation (Mr., Ms. and so forth.) retrieved from the Case database record with the recipient's last name in field #20. The address of the recipient is placed in field #17. If it's a "CLI" letter, the

information is found in field #305. If it's an "INS" letter, then an XLookup to Insadd.dtf is performed.

Step 4. The *Very truly yours* line is composed by taking advantage of the XLookup which retrieved the assigned attorney initials from Case and placed them in field #230. Programming then does the following. (You could use a Lookup table as an alternative):

```
#8=#230; If #8="CBS" then #31="Clifford B. Sobin";
If  #8="GRW" then #31="George R. Washington";

#30=@Str("~Very truly yours,"+"
"+"
"+"
"+"
"+"~" + #31);
```

The end result of this is that field #30 now contains the Very truly yours lines with the "~" character preceding each line.

Step 5. The Drafter/Secretary initials can be added via a Userselect list or preprogrammed based on who the drafter is. Field #9 contains the initials of the letter's author and the typist. The user can also be asked if there will be enclosures or if the letter will be copied to anyone. If a copy is to be sent to someone else, the user is sent to field #21 to enter that information. When this process is finished, the user is then sent to field #500 to select the form letter:

```
@Msgbox("Select The Initials Of The
Secretary","","");

#9=@Userselect("ab,cd,ef");#9=@Left(#9,2);
#9=@Str(#8+"/"+#9);

If @Askuser("Are There Any Enclosures?","","")
Then
#11=@Str("Enclosure");

If @Askuser("Is This Letter CC: To Anyone","","")
Then
{#21=("CC:"); Goto #21}; Goto #500.
```

Step 6. The user is then prompted for a list of form letters:

```
XUserselectr("formlet.dtf","x#30","x#40",#5,#5,#25)
```

This statement creates a Userselect list of form letters relating to the class of letter (Field #5) the user selected to be sent. The first line of each new paragraph is preceded in the form letter by the "^" character (to be replaced by a single tab indent in Word). If a unique form letter is chosen, the only character in the letter will be "^" and the user must be trained to start subsequent paragraphs with the "^" character. Alternatively, the user can indent on his or her own, but the type of font selected in Word can cause an uneven result.

Step 7. The final step is to assemble the letter and prompt the user to specify the subject of it. Assembly in field #40

(and the addition of a ":" in #20, the *Dear* line) is done on entry to the Subject field (#50) with the following programming:

```
<#50:
If @Right(#20,1) <> ":" Then #20=@Str(#20 + ":");
#40=@Str(#10+"
"+"
"+#17+"
"+"
"+#15+"
"+"
"+"Dear "+#20+"
"+"
"+#500+"
"+"
"+#25+"
"+"
"+#30+"
"+"
"+#9+"
"+#11+"
"+"
"+#21);@Msg("Type in the Subject of your Letter.")
```

This places the entire letter, left justified, in field #40. The user then is prompted to enter the Subject of the letter in field #50. When the cursor leaves #50, programming takes the user to field #7 where the statement:

```
<#7 = (@Str(@Date) +" - "+ #7);
@Macro("Subject to Memo")
```

adds the date to the subject in field #50. The macro then copies (F11) the contents of Field #50 to Q&A's clipboard, goes to the Memo field, opens it (F6), moves the contents down two lines (carriage returns with Insert On), then goes back to the top of the field where the contents of the clipboard are pasted (F12) into the memo field. (This keeps the letter subjects in chronological order from the top.) The macro then moves to field #40, invokes WinClip via its default Ctrl-C macro, and returns the user to the Index, ready to create the next letter. The macros necessary for this operation are in the article.asc file included in the download file for Online Edition subscribers.

Step 8. The end result of all of this is that the entire letter is now in a WinClip-generated file that Word will paste (Ctrl-V) anywhere you wish in the target document. Since the user will have entered the subject of the letter in the Mail.dtf record, a history of all correspondence can be readily obtained while in the Case record via XLookups. (See Field #450 in Case.dtf..)

Step 9. The user now switches to Word, which is already open in the background. A Word macro, preferably placed on the toolbar as an icon, is clicked. The macro replaces all the "~" characters with seven tab stops, replaces all the "^" characters with one tab stop, places a new page character at the end of the document and goes to the top

@*Help*

EDITED BY WILLIAM HALPERN

Q&A Video Crash

I find it mysterious that you have not seen what I've described. It is definitely a freeze up Q&A style. This has happened twice now. Here's what happens. I open my Macro file to edit one of the macros. (The file isn't too large, just 102 lines.) After editing and saving, I press Esc and BOOM! the entire screen goes to colorful little rectangles, most with figures or "smiley faces" in them, and many of them blinking. This does not happen every time I edit the file. With no choice but to shut down, upon returning to Q&A, most of the Global Utilities settings and printer installations are lost. Here are the system details:

```
Q&A version: 4.0
Operating System: MS- DOS 6.2
Size of Hard Drive:  130,279,424 Bytes
Config.sys:
DEVICE=C:\DOS\himem.sys
DEVICE=C:\DOS\EMM386.EXE RAM HIGHSCAN I=B000-B7FF
DEVICEHIGH=C:\DOS\SETVER.EXE
FILES=40
DOS=UMB
LASTDRIVE=E
FCBS=4,0
DOS=HIGH
STACKS=9,256
SHELL=C:\DOS\COMMAND.COM C:\DOS\  /p
BUFFERS=20,0
Conventional Memory: DOS/TST-29K   Q&A-611K
Switches:  VO YM1
```

Jon

From what I can see, the problem is probably related to a corrupted QA.CFG file. That's where all the settings you're losing are stored. I would delete that file in the Q&A program files directory then exit and restart Q&A. When you do this, you will have to reset all your default settings. I realize you have to do this when Q&A crashes, but that's not the same as starting Q&A with no QA.CFG file at all. The QA.CFG stores default settings for your paths, printers, network ID, your display characteristics and other things you set *after* you install Q&A. And Q&A creates a new QA.CFG file if it doesn't exist. The one that comes on the install disks is nothing at all. No upgrade information or the like is stored in it. So it will not mess up anything by renaming it or deleting it. How does the

file get corrupted? Well, how does any computer file that's written and rewritten each time you run a program get corrupted? If Q&A locked up or was not at 100% during a particular session, this file could easily become corrupted.

Network Database Share Mode

I have a question regarding making Q&A multi-user. One computer is running Windows 95 and the other one is Windows 98. I mapped the drive already and it's running Q&A from the server. The problem is that only one or the other PC's can use a database at a time. I think you have to set a parameter in config.sys or in some other place. If you could guide me, I would appreciate it.

Wynn

Even though you're calling one PC a "server," you're probably working in a peer-to-peer network mode with two workstations. Q&A knows when one of the PCs is working on a local drive vs. a true network drive and will not automatically allow the database to be shared unless you tell it to. You have to set your database (File / Design / Secure a File / Declare Sharing Mode) to "Allow" instead of "Automatic." This will solve the problem. Incidentally, on an NT-based sever or workstation, even on a true server, always set sharing mode to "Allow." You will take a minor hit in performance, but your databases will be much more secure.

Keyboard Not Working Right

All of a sudden, in my databases, Shift-Tab no longer moves the cursor back one field. It moves the cursor *forward* one field. What happened?

Micky

This was a stumper. I've only seen something like this once before and it had to do with the user replacing a standard keyboard with a programmable one. For some reason, Q&A doesn't seem to recognize the keystrokes from that keyboard correctly. We spoke on the phone and you confirmed that this is the case. The problem will most likely go away if you switch back to a standard keyboard.

No More Table View

I seem to have lost the ability to view my data in a table view. Whenever I press Alt-F6 in a record to switch to Table View, nothing happens (Q&A 5.0). How can I fix this? Do I have to reinstall Q&A?

Terri

Q&A will let you redefine (and record) almost any keyboard keystroke combination as a macro, even as a macro that does nothing. Most of the time, Q&A will warn you if you attempt to redefine a key combination that it uses as a default. You'll get a message like this: "That key is already used by Q&A. Do you want to redefine it? (Y/N)" However, the Alt-F6 key combination works differently. It seems that Q&A 5.0 doesn't recognize that combination as a system keystroke and gives you *No* warning. It just merrily lets you redefine it, even if the macro you record after it does nothing, like this:

1. Shift-F2

2. Define Macro

3. Alt-F6

4. Shift-F2

5. F-10

At this point you have disabled the Alt-F6 Table View key combination as well as the mouse click on the Alt-F6 at the bottom of the screen. *No Table View!* Press Alt-F2 or right-click your mouse and look at the list of your macros. If you see an Alt-F6 on the list, escape and delete the macro this way:

1. Press Shift-F2

2. Select Delete Macro

3. Highlight the Alt-F6 macro and press Enter

4. Press F10 to save

Your Table view should now be restored!

ALLOW, SUBST, DOS, and Windows Confusion

We subscribe to *The Quick Answer* and are very active Q&A users. We run QA 5.0 on a Novell 3.12 network with approximately 20 stable workstations running DOS 6.22 and a few off and on users that log in with Windows 95/98 notebooks. We recently changed the Sharing Mode in several databases to "Allow." This works fine on the DOS PC's, but causes a problem on the Windows PC's when they're not logged in to the network but running the SUBST command. When going in to any database that has been changed to "Allow," we get an error message saying that DOS SHARE must be loaded. One of the laptops we have runs Windows 95 version 4.00.950 and has a share.exe file in it's win\command directory. Loading this works great on this PC and lets it run normally. I was hoping this version of SHARE.EXE (dated 07-11-95) would run on all the Windows PC's. But that's not the case because when I tried it on a machine that runs Windows 95 4.00.111, I got an "incorrect DOS version" error message. Do you know of a newer SHARE.EXE that works on newer versions of Windows 95/98? I can't seem to find one.

Mike

This one is very strange unless you think back to the old DOS days and make some assumptions about the way you're running your systems. Let's start with this: If you're correctly running Q&A on your laptops, in a Window with all the memory properties correctly set, this situation should never occur. Windows 9x versions use an internal share command and Q&A will run correctly regardless of the sharing setup or whether you're addressing a local or network drive. It is all taken care of by the operating system and is masked from the Q&A application. Q&A always thinks it is running in a network environment. The only thing it can determine is whether it's addressing a local or network drive (thus the need for the "Allow" database Sharing Mode). This was not true for Windows 3x or DOS. In those operating systems, Q&A made the network vs. standalone PC determination. To run a "shared" database on a standalone PC, you had to preload DOS SHARE or Q&A would balk because you were telling it that it was on a network and it was seeing only local drives with no network connections. The SUBST command has nothing to do with your problem. You are probably using that correctly to make Q&A always point to the same drive letter that it does on the network.

So, the assumption is this: you are running Q&A on your Windows PC's by rebooting to a DOS prompt (you can make the Q&A shortcut do this for you by clicking on MS-DOS Mode on the Advanced tab) and thereby disabling all the useful features Microsoft has added to make Windows 9x an improvement over DOS and Windows 3x. Once you are at the DOS prompt (only in the reboot mode), you are in a bare DOS machine and need to load all the proper TSR's and devices. In addition, you've also lost all of Windows' advanced memory management features and are running Q&A in an almost crippled mode. Look into the back issues of *The Quick Answer* and check out www.quickanswer.com, www.pcta-usa.com, or www.qaug.com for articles on properly setting up Q&A in Windows 9x. You'll no longer have to worry about what version of SHARE to run. Let your operating system and Q&A take care of everything for you!

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How to Mass Update Your Database

ALEC MULVEY

MASS Update is a process you use to update multiple records in a database in one operation. Mass Updating is an important component of Q&A—and very flexible. It's available in Q&A for DOS/ Win. Here are some of the features of Mass Update:

- You can make changes to many records quickly.

- You can update fields that cannot be edited directly (such as Read-only fields).

- You can specify which records are to be changed.

- Complex programming statements can be included as part of a Mass Update specification.

- You can choose to have form programming and On-Record-Entry and On-Record-Exit programming executed in each record during the Mass Update.

- You can choose to confirm each record before it is updated, or to have Q&A update all affected records automatically.

- Mass Update Specs can be named and saved for re-use.

- Mass Update is an exclusive operation—no other users can be using the database during a Mass Update.

Mass updating is frequently included in a macro to automate a process such as posting information from one database to another. It would be used typically to stamp the posted records as having been posted.

Preparing to Mass Update

Although a Mass Update doesn't require it, it is wise to make a backup of your database (to the normal data directory, under a different name is adequate) before Mass Updating. The reason for this is obviously so you can reinstate the original database if something should go wrong. It is a common fallacy to think that in the event of an error you can just reverse or "undo" a Mass Update. Very often you can't. And frequently the criteria you specified to identify the records to be updated are lost during the Mass Update.

Having backed up the database, you then perform the following steps:

1. Select File / Mass Update (Q&A DOS) , and specify the database you wish to update.

2. At the Retrieve Spec, specify the records you wish to update, or leave the Spec blank to update all the records. (A saved Retrieve Spec can be recalled by pressing Alt-F8 for a list of Saved Specs.) Press F-10 to continue.

3. Q&A displays the Update Spec. Type the "#" plus a unique number into each field which is to be updated or referred to in the Update Spec. *The statements are executed in numerical order.* Some examples of Update statements are shown below. You can save the Update Spec for reuse by pressing Shift-F8 and giving it a name. This is a good idea, if only because you can see where you went wrong if the Mass Update doesn't work as you had intended. Press F-10 to continue.

4. If desired, press F8 from the Update Spec to display the *Auto Program Recalc* screen. This misleadingly-named screen allows you to specify that each record involved in the Update should additionally be recalculated according to the Calc statements in the Program Spec. You can also have any On-Record-Entry and On-Record-Exit programming statements executed as well. You can select any or all three of these options—they are not mutually exclusive. On-*Field*-Entry and On-*Field*-Exit statements cannot be executed during a Mass Update. Press F-10 to continue.

5. Before Q&A runs the Mass Update, it will display a message box indicating the number of records it plans to update for you. This should correspond to what you expect. If not, press Esc to cancel the operation. You are also offered the choice of confirming each update individually or updating all the affected records without confirmation. If you choose to confirm each record individually, you can switch to automatic update at any time. Make note of the pertinent keystrokes for these options.

Using Update statements

Following are some examples of the kinds of statements you can use at the Update Spec:

#1=@Date to put the current date in the field.
#1=@Number to incrementally auto-number the field. (Remember to reset the @Number if necessary. See below.)

#1 = 500
#1 = "Admin Assistant" (Text enclosed in quotes)
#1 = "3 July 2000"
#1 = #2 + #3

The last example above adds the contents of field #2 to the contents of field #3 and places the result in the field #1. This would be appropriate for fields containing numerical data.

#1 = #2
#2 = ""

The above update program copies the contents of field #2 to field #1 (replacing the previous contents of field #1). The second statement clears the contents of field #2. (Quotes without anything inside them tells Q&A to clear the field.)

#1 = #1 + " " + #2

The above statement appends the text in the field #2 to the text in the field #1, separated by a space.

When numbering records using @Number, you will probably want to (or should) sort the records so that Q&A numbers them in some logical order. You specify your sort in the usual way by pressing F8 at the Retrieve Spec and typing **1AS** in the field you wish to sort on. Additionally, you are likely to want to reset the @Number to a value of your choice, either before you run the Mass Update or after. You can do this by displaying *any* record in Search/Update mode and pressing Ctrl F8. In the *Reset @Number* dialog, type the *number last used* and press F10. For example, if you wanted Q&A to start numbering at 1, you'd enter 0 (zero) as shown in Figure 1.

```
    Reset @NUMBER from 847    to 0
```

Figure 1: Resetting Q&A's @Number counter to zero.

Notes about Mass Update

The Field ID numbers #1, #2, and so forth you use in the Update Spec relate *only* to the Update Spec. That is, they are not cross-referenced to similar Field ID numbers in the Program Spec or any other Spec.

Dates can be entered in any format acceptable to Q&A. The Global Format Options screen that displays when you save or resave a database design shows the various date format options.

Currency amounts don't require the currency symbol.

It is vital to remember that Q&A executes Mass Update statements in Field ID number order, *not* in the order the fields appear in the database form. Accordingly, as in the following example, it is necessary to number the field that will contain the copied information with a *lower* number than the field that contains that data.

```
#1 = #2

#2 = ""
```

In the above example, The second statement (in field #2) clears field #2 after it's data has been copied to field #1 by field #1's statement. If the fields were the other way around, field #2 would be cleared first, and there would be nothing in it to copy to field #1!

Another example of where this is important is when a group of fields need to be "bumped." This commonly occurs where the latest transaction, for example, is to be inserted at the head of a "column" of fields as in Figures 2 through 6. (Figure 6 is on the following page.)

Remember that you can save any Mass Update Spec for re-use by pressing Shift-F8 after you've filled out the Spec.

You can optionally use Field Names after a Field ID

Figure 2. Data to be changed via a Mass Update. The top date needs to be replaced with the current date and the others moved down.
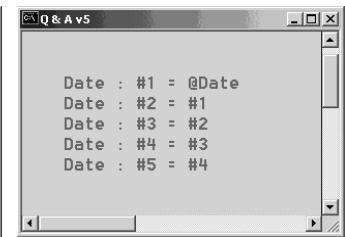

Figure 3. A *wrong* Mass Update Spec. Work it out and you'll see that you'll get the current date in *all* the fields! (See Figure 4.)
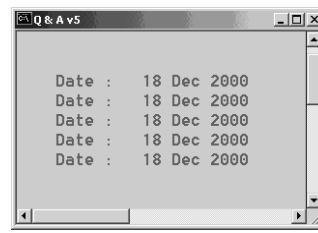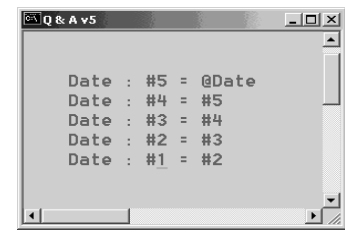

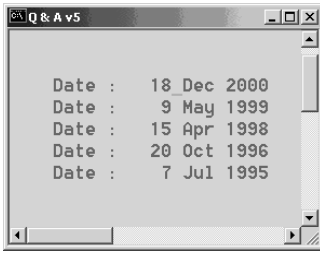**Figure 4**. *Not* what was intended!

Figure 5. The correct Update Spec.

```
Q & A v5
    Date :    18 Dec 2000
    Date :     9 May 1999
    Date :    15 Apr 1998
    Date :    20 Oct 1996
    Date :     7 Jul 1995
```

Figure 6. And the result.

number when referencing other fields in an Update Spec.

For example, your update program, all in one field (in this case a position or title field), could be constructed along these lines:

```
#1: If #1 = "Admin Assistant" Then {
Bonus Grade = "4";
Bonus Amount = Salary * .05 }
```

You can use If/Then statements in an Update Spec. For an update like the one shown above, you might have already specified in your Mass Update Retrieve Spec that you want to update only the records where the Position field (#1 here) contains "Admin Assistant." The optional If/Then conditional statement in the Update Spec can provide a kind of additional assurance that Q&A will update *only* the "Admin Assistant" records (Just in case you really didn't get the Retrieve Spec quite right.)

Just remember to always make a backup copy of the database before Mass Updating it. Even the best of us can be prone to think, "Oh, this is a simple update. I don't need to back up"—only to thump our heads after we see the results and realize we did something stupid or didn't get it quite right.

Conclusion

Mass Updates allow you to make almost limitless changes to the information in your records. When saved Mass Update specs are run by macros, they offer a powerful yet effortless way to keep your data up to date. Macros will be covered in a future Q&A Basics article.

A Clipboard for Q&A 4.0

Q&A 4.0 for DOS users do not have the benefit of QA 5.0's F11/F12 Clipboard copy and paste keys. However, you can replicate this wherever you have access to Q&A Write's features, such as in expanded fields in the Program Spec, Mass Update Spec and also in Search/Update mode (except in Number, Date, Time or Money or Templated fields). Here's how to copy and paste text or programming in Q&A 4.0:

1. Press F6 to open the Field Editor.
2. Place the cursor at the start of the text to copy.
3. Press Ctrl-F5 (Copy Block to File).
4. Select the text you want to copy and press F10.
5. Enter "temp" as the file to save the copied text to.
6. Answer "Yes" to "*Do you want to overwrite Temp?*"
7. Press Esc and move to the target field.
8. Press F6 to open the Field Editor.
9. Place the cursor where you want the text to be inserted.
10. Press F8 (Options) / D(ocuments) / I(nsert).
11. Type *temp* and press Enter.

By the way, you can optionally press Alt-F5 to *move* the text to the "temp" file. This deletes the copied source text.

This might seem long-winded, but it quickly becomes almost automatic, and it's an awful lot quicker and more accurate than re-typing programming statements!

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Complex Mass Updates

You might want to perform a complex Mass Update where you have many records to update. You'd like to "try out" an Update Spec without applying it to all the records, find out if the results are as you expected, restore the original database, and so on. Here are a few suggestions that might help:

1. Create and save the Mass Update spec *before* you make the backup copy of the database. That way you can recall it and fine-tune it for the next "attempt" (or save it as a model for the next time if it's correct).

2. As you will be aborting the Mass Update after saving it as above, enter some junk at the Retrieve Spec. That way, if you slip up and actually go on to apply the Mass Update, there will be no records found and no harm will be done.

3. Construct the Mass Update spec, save it, backup the database, then run the update telling Q&A that you *do* want to "*confirm each update individually.*" For the first few records, jot down the unique identifier field for that record and press Shift-F10 to update it. After updating a few records like this, press Esc and abort the update. Search these records and view the results. If they're okay, then repeat the Mass Update, remembering to *exclude* the *already updated* records if necessary.

4. (The method I use). Put your prospective Mass Update program into the Program Spec instead of the Update Spec. Retrieve a likely record and press F8 to calc it. Check the results. If they're okay, copy the programming from the Program Spec to the Update Spec (remembering to remove it from the Program Spec). Q&A 5.0 users can use the F11 / F12 clipboard keys to copy and paste the programming. For Q&A 4.0 for DOS users, see the sidebar above.

WinClip/Secretary... cont'd from page 5

of the page so that it is easy for the user to make any required alterations. If you want to get fancy, your Word macro can change the font as well to ensure consistency.

Conclusion

I've demonstrated is a basic document production system that integrates our Q&A information with Microsoft Word. (Examples of the programming can be found in the Case.dtf, Formlet.dtf, Mail.dtf and Insadd.dtf databases.) The application will not work without the macros in the article.asc file. You'll need a copy of WinClip (available from Marble Publications, publisher of *The Quick Answer*) and have it installed as *9-winclip* on your External Programs Menu (Utilities / External Programs). You can create the Word macro in Word by clicking *Tools / Macro/ Record a new macro*, then following the instructions and keying in the commands and keystrokes to search for the special characters ("~" and "^") and replacing them with the appropriate number of tabs. The system can be augmented to allow for the most complex of document assembly needs and secretarial work patterns.

Without WinClip, it would have been very difficult to integrate the information contained in our Q&A databases with each individual Word letter or document. With the vital link provided by WinClip, and a thorough understanding of the way our business operates, many of our office's repetitive and otherwise mind-numbing tasks have been eliminated or reduced. As a result, the efficiency and accuracy of our staff has increased, they're happier, and all of us now have a greater incentive to accurately enter information into our databases!

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> **WinClip** is available for Q&A for DOS 4.0 and 5.0. The application in this article requires Q&A 5.0 due to it's design. However, the **WinClip** part of it would work the same in either version of Q&A. You can order **WinClip** from Marble Publications for $49 using the Online Order Form available at www.quickanswer.com.

Quick **Tip** Create a 'Hanging Indent' Report (With Dot Leaders)

You can design an attractive, easy-to-read report that wraps one column under the other to make the report fit nicely across the limited width of a page. In the example shown below, if the company were in its own column, the report would be too wide. But by wrapping the company under the person's name—then indenting the company a few spaces—you solve the width problem *and* make it easy to follow the alphabetical order of peoples' names because of the hanging indent. Also notice the dot leaders that guide the eye across the page.

```
International Q&A Conference 2001 Registered Attendee & Arrival List

                                        Pays       Din-
                                        Staff      ners  Showed
               Name & Company           Guest  Status  Paid  Up (√)
-------------------------------------   -----  ------  ----  ------
Alme, Joyce.............................  P   Paid     1   _____
    International Music Camp
Anderson, Paul.........................  P   Paid     1   _____
    Systems-Consulting
Anderson, Richard......................  P   Paid     1   _____
    California State Board of Control
Angell, Anthony........................  P   Not Paid  0   _____
    Montgomery Home Title, Inc.
Ashcraft, Shelly.......................  P   Paid     2   _____
    First State Bank
Baker, Bobbi...........................  P   Paid     2   _____
    N/A
Baker, Dan.............................  P   Paid     0   _____
    Apple Valley Eyewear
Beamer, Al.............................  P   Paid     0   _____
    Title Marketing Co.
Beisel, Diane..........................  P   Paid     1   _____
    City of Lloydminster
```

To do this, you make the name and company field invisible at the Column/Sort Spec, like this:

```
Last Name: 1AS, I
First Name: 2AS, I
Company: 5, I
```

Then create the following derived column:

```
Heading: 40:Name & Company
Formula: #1 + ", " + #2 + @Text(40-(@Len(#1)
        + @Len(#2) + 2),".")+ @Text(30, " ")
        + @Chr(9) + #5 + @Chr(13) + @Chr(10)
Column/Sort Spec: 3,C
```

This rather complex derived column **(1)** adds a comma between the last and first names, **(2)** subtracts the length of these two values (plus 2) from the column's fixed with of 40, **(3)** fills the difference (the gap) with a dot leader, **(4)** adds 30 spaces of "padding" (which forces the line to wrap), then **(5)** adds a tab indent with @Chr(9), the company name, then @Chr(13) and @Chr(10) to force a carriage return/line feed.

In case you're interested, the rightmost "Showed Up" column's formula simply adds seven underscore characters:

```
Heading: Showed!Up
Formula: @Text(7,"_")
Column/Sort Spec: 30
```

Tom Marcellus

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consequences. (In contrast, Q&A crashing can damage your database.) You simply need to avoid expanding a field in the Retrieve Spec when printing a mailmerge or mailing labels. There are several ways to do this.

One way is to simply make the field larger. Don't worry about *generations* here—redesigning the database by changing a field's length does not create a new generation.

Another way is to use programming. Instead of entering, say, "**846;214;752**" in the Customer ID field, you can enter "**#1**" in the Customer ID field and the following retrieval expression in any field long enough to show it without expanding the field:

```
{#1=846 or #1=214 or #1=752}
```

This assumes that #1 is a number field. If it's a text field, then you will need to type quotes around the values, like this:

```
#1="846"
```

A third way is to fill out the Retrieve Spec in normal Search/Update mode and save it (Shift-F8) to a name such as "temp." Then, when you print the report, press Alt-F8 at the Retrieve Spec, select "temp," and go on from there.

Or, you can simply redesign the report with the desired Retrieve Spec. There is inconsistency in Q&A 5.0 over when the Field Editor is open and when the Long Value Editor—the single-line at the bottom of the screen—is available. The Field Editor displays only when you print a report with changes. So you can safely enter your long value in report design, then print the report *without* changes.

The quickest and probably the best workaround is to make use of Q&A 5.0's internal Clipboard:

At the Retrieve Spec, enter the long value(s) into any field that's wide enough to accommodate them without expanding the field. With your cursor in this field, press F11 to copy the search string value to the Clipboard. (You can then clear the field by pressing Shift-F4.) Tab to the field you really want the values in and press F12 to paste them. You *don't* need to expand the field to paste the Clipboard contents—that's the point.

Once you are aware of this problem it is not difficult to side-step it. Just choose whichever of the above best suits your needs.

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