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A Deposit Report You Can Take to the Bank



TOM MARCELLUS

DURING a recent conversation with a small business owner on the subject of tracking accounts receivable in Q&A, the issue of bank deposits came up. I was surprised to learn that his company, which received on average 500 checks each month, was still manually preparing their weekly bank deposits using one of those ancient Deposit Ticket books that banks give their business accounts. You've seen them. The tickets have space for about 60 checks per, using both sides of the thing. For each check, you handwrite in the check number and amount. You then add up amounts, write in the total number of checks and total deposit at the bottom, clip the checks to the ticket, and truck the lot on over to the Bank of Oldeville to make your deposit.

Well, he was doing it the hard way, and I told him so, pointing out that my own company uses a simple Q&A report to print its deposit slips, attaching a copy of the report—instead of a manually-filled-out bank-supplied deposit ticket—to the checks being deposited.

“Your bank accepts that?” he asked. “Sure,” I said. “It has for years—ever since it realized that it would *have* to if it wanted my business.”

It took just a few minutes to take this fellow through the setup that would generate his deposit tickets for him in Q&A. It's a snap. I'll use Q&A 4.0 for DOS for my example, but the database and report can be just as easily designed in Q&A for Windows.

The database

First, you'll need a database to track your check information. Here, at a minimum, you'll want the current date (or the date the next deposit is to be made), the payer, the check number, and the amount of the check. This could be a full-blown accounts receivable database containing a lot of additional information, but I'll keep it simple.

Figure 1 shows a sample record from Deposit.dtf. (It's included in the download file for Online Edition subscribers.)

The **Date** field is formatted “D” for dates at the Format Spec (the screen that appears when you save the database design in Q&A for DOS.) The **Amount** field is formatted “M” for money. The other fields are left at the

Checks Received For Bank Deposit	
Date:	Nov 22, 2001
Trans No.:	1
Payer:	William Witherspoon
Check Number:	3544
Amount:	\$354.66
Notes:	

DEPOSIT.DTF Retrieved form 1 of -- Total Forms: 4 Page 1 of 1
Esc-Exit F1-Help Alt+F6-Table F7-Search F8-Calc F10-Continue

Figure 1. A sample record from Deposit.dtf.

The Quick Answer

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default “T” for text.

If you like, you can have Q&A autofill the **Date** and **Trans No.** fields. To do this, go to

the Initial Values Spec (*File / Design / Customize / Set Initial Values* in Q&A for DOS) and type *@Date* in the **Date** field and *@Number* is the **Trans No.** field. As you'll see, the **Trans No.** field will ensure that the checks are listed in the deposit ticket report in the same order as they were entered into the database, which should be in the same order as the checks themselves when they're paper-clipped to your Q&A report/deposit ticket.

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Subscription Change Starting with the January 2002 Issue

FOUR years ago we began making **THE QUICK ANSWER** optionally available online in an Acrobat PDF (*Portable Document Format*) edition that subscribers could download each month at www.quickanswer.com.

The advantages of the PDF edition were (and are) its lower annual subscription rate, the fact that it can be read on-screen as well as be printed on most any printer, the ability to search any issue (like a word processor document) for terms or phrases, and copy programming from it to paste into Q&A, and the sample databases and other files that we supply in the download file with most every issue.

Today, as we near the end of 2001, we have long since passed the point where the majority of our subscribers have opted for Acrobat PDF edition, making continuation of the **printed** edition of **THE QUICK ANSWER** no longer feasible due to the costs of producing and mailing the smaller quantities.

For this reason, beginning with the January 2002 issue, **THE QUICK ANSWER** will be available **only** in Acrobat PDF format that you will receive each month by downloading it anytime during the month at www.quickanswer.com.

To make the transition easier, each month, around the 1st, **we will send each subscriber an email reminder that the new issue has been posted** and is available for download. This reminder notice will contain a link that you can click on to go directly to www.quickanswer.com where you can retrieve your issue. This way, you won't forget to do so each month.

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If you have been receiving the **printed** edition of **THE QUICK ANSWER** and do not wish to continue your subscription with the Acrobat PDF edition, you may cancel your subscription and receive a refund on all unpublished issues to which you're entitled. I'll tell you how in a moment.

If you are interested in the new Q&A-replacement product (code-named "Sesame") coming from Lantica Software, please note that in all likelihood Marble Publications, publisher of **THE QUICK ANSWER**, will be launching a separate newsletter devoted to the new product that will focus on transitioning from Q&A to the new product. Both newsletters (**THE QUICK ANSWER** and the new one) will be published for a time until interest in Q&A alone fades to a point where **THE QUICK ANSWER** can no longer hold its own.

Subscribers to **THE QUICK ANSWER** will be entitled to transfer their existing **QUICK ANSWER** subscriptions to the new newsletter on an issue-for-issue basis at any time and at no additional cost.

Eventually, when we do cease publication of **THE QUICK ANSWER**, subscribers who have remaining issues and do not wish to transfer their subscription to the **new** newsletter will be given a pro-rata refund on any unpublished **QUICK ANSWER** issues.

What we need you to do right away

The new **reminder notice** system we will be inaugurating with the January 2002 issue of **THE QUICK ANSWER** requires that we have your current **email address**.

The Quick Answer™

Editor / Publisher
Tom Marcellus

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Deposit Report... cont'd from page 1

There's nothing much to Deposit.dtf beyond this, unless you want to get fancy. You simply fill out a record for each check when you're preparing a deposit.

The deposit report

The deposit report design is straightforward. It's a columnar report that prints the check numbers and amounts in the order they were entered into the database. It shows a count of the number of checks and the total amount of the deposit (See Figure 2.)

In the report's Retrieve Spec, you can use the programming expression `{@Date}` in the **Date** field. If you enter all the checks and print the deposit report on the same day. If you enter each check when received, then you'll have to include the variable *range* of dates in your report's Retrieve Spec each time you run the report, such as `11/1/2001..11/15/2001` for checks that were added to the database on or between these two dates.

In the report's Column/Sort Spec, type **1, AS, I** in the **Trans No.** field, **2C** in the **Check Number** field, and **3T** in the **Amount** field. (See Figure 3.) You won't be including the **Trans No.** in the printed report, but you want Q&A to sort on it.

There's nothing special about the Print Options for this report (see Figure 4) except for one thing. I like to have Q&A automatically print two copies of my deposit

ticket. (One for my file, one for the bank.) Since I print to an HP LaserJet-compatible printer, I can use the old `<-&I2X` printer control code on the *Printer Control Codes* line to get two copies.

The Define Page screen for the report (press F8 from the Q&A for DOS Print Options screen) is shown in Figure 5. Nothing unusual here either, except perhaps for the three-line header and three-line footer. It should go without saying that, at the very

```

Deposit to Account of Nantucket Supplies, Inc.
Account No. 393 423 4922
November 22, 2001 Page 1
    
```

Check Number	Amount
3544	\$354.66
6755	\$278.65
7001	\$435.45
7887	\$786.33
3498	\$347.65
766	\$398.56
675	\$676.00
7655	\$675.22
78668	\$1434.87
765	\$298.55
3455	\$77.40
A345677-45	\$1254.66
344567	\$3056.77
8766	\$645.05
18677	\$7566.00
9867	\$77.49
45677	\$1344.98

Total:	\$19708.29
Count:	17

```

Nantucket Supplies, Inc.
4433 Industrial Way, Santa Ana, CA 92677
Phone 714-780-6755 / Fax 714-780-3232
    
```

Figure 2. Typical deposit ticket report.

least, your company's name and account number should be printed on each page of the deposit ticket along with the date of the deposit. Here, I've also added the company's address and phone and fax numbers.

That's all there is to it. You simply enter your checks and run the report when it's deposit time.

With this little database and its report you'll never again have to handwrite your deposit tickets. And you'll have other options as well, such as a history of every deposit you made (you can add a **Date Deposited** field to the database and Mass Update it with the actual deposit date), as well as a way to quickly locate a check received from any client or customer. You'll also be able to run sales or income reports by customer and by any date range.

Tom Marcellus is editor of *The Quick Answer*.



Figure 3. The Column/Sort Spec.

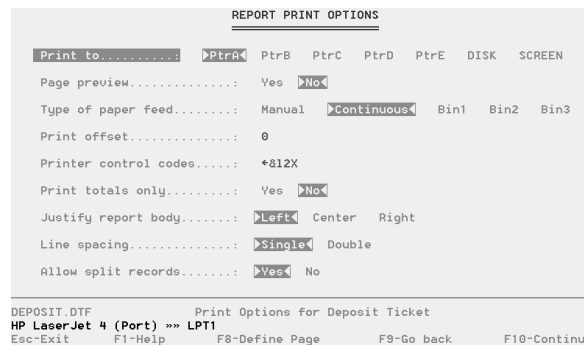


Figure 4. The Print Options screen.



Figure 5. The Define Page screen.

Preparing for *Sesame*— Optimising XLookup Programming



ALEC MULVEY

DEVELOPMENT of Lantica's *Sesame* database manager is well into the advanced stages now, and Q&A users around the world are becoming increasingly eager to get their hands on this long-awaited Q&A replacement product. You may regularly browse www.lantica.com to keep up to date with the development news and read the various updates that appear there from time to time to advise and educate on the new *Sesame* features. (Much of this information has appeared in *The Quick Answer*.) The fact is, now is not too soon to be getting ready for the transition to *Sesame*. In this and subsequent articles, I'm going to take you through some of the preparations you can make today to ensure a smooth transition when the time comes. This involves specific steps you can take with your existing Q&A applications so that you will get the most benefit from *Sesame* starting the moment you open your converted Q&A databases in the new product.

About applications

But won't *Sesame* just convert my Q&A databases as they are? Yes, it will. You can rest assured that all the main components of healthy Q&A databases—including the data, form design, programming, reports, saved specs and the like—will convert painlessly to *Sesame*. The thing that you will have to prepare for is converting an *application* you've designed in Q&A.

To expect another program to convert entire *applications* with 100% of the same functionality as the original one is to expect too much. An application is *more* than a database. It typically consists of *several* databases linked together by XLookup programming and/or macros and custom menus. XLookup programming is part of the database and will be converted by *Sesame*. Macros and custom menus, on the other hand, are *not* part of any database and cannot be converted. (See the October 2001 issue, p. 2.)

Where you will have to put some thinking and advanced effort into the transition is where you have an *application* rather than just stand-alone databases. Each database will convert, and the programming linking them together—the XLookup functions and statements—will continue to work *depending on how you've programmed them*. In this article, I'm going to tell you how to find

programming that may *not* work in *Sesame* and the steps you can take to correct it now without adversely affecting your applications as you are using them today.

"Wordy" XLookup programming

There is a tendency, I have found, for Q&A users to type more than they need in XLookup programming. Here's an example:

```
Add1 = @XLookup("F:\QA5\Data\Clients.dtf",  
Clientref, "Clientref", "Address1")
```

In this statement, the data for the **Add1** field is being retrieved from the **Address1** field in the **Clients** database based on the matching **Clientref** field. Nothing really wrong with this—it works fine. But there are two areas where it can be improved. The first, and not too important, is that it can be shortened. @XLookup can be abbreviated @XLu, and you don't need the ".dtf" filename extension after the database name. Also, you don't need the full pathname, *F:\QA5\Data\Clients.dtf* when simply *Clients* will do. This last only applies if the **Clients** database is in the default data path (more on this later). Shortening the programming this way will benefit you if your database is highly programmed and you are close to the maximum programming that Q&A will allow. So this will be of marginal or no benefit to most people.

But the *serious* matter—and what this article is about—is, again, this question of paths. You do *not* want full pathnames in your XLookup programming. Why not? Well, apart from the minor matter of using up programming space discussed above:

- Full paths make the application inflexible. You cannot move your databases or use different drive mappings without reprogramming the affected databases.
- *Sesame*, since it knows how to be truly client-server, handles paths differently than Q&A.

Specifying an external database

I used to think that there were two ways of referencing an external database—full path or no path. I now know that there are *three* ways—and Q&A handles each of them quite differently:

Option 1: Full pathname:

F:\QA5\Data\Clients.dtf

This method specifies the absolute database location. Move **Clients.dtf** to another location and the XLookup won't work.

Option 2: Just database filename. If you use:

Clients.dtf (or just Clients)

then Q&A will always look for this database in the default data directory. In Q&A for DOS you specify this default data directory at the *Main Menu / Utilities / Set Global Options* screen as shown in Figure 1.

I have stated many times that this *no-path* method is absolutely the best way to run Q&A (all databases are located in the default data path). If you really feel you can't do this, then there are other methods you can use to meet your objectives while still adhering to this simple rule.

A while back, I came across the *third* way to point Q&A to an external database:

Option 3: Nearly Full pathname:

If you use this:

\QA5\Data\Clients.dtf

Q&A will follow this path from the root directory to the database. But the drive letter is missing—so what does Q&A use? My first guess was the drive letter that's specified as the default data directory in Global Options—but this is not the case. Instead, *Q&A uses the letter of the drive where the Q&A program files are located.*

Consequently, if your databases reside on a network server, this third path-specifying method rules out running Q&A the recommended way—a copy of Q&A installed on each PC. If the Q&A program is on your PC's C: drive, then Q&A will add "C:" as the drive letter in the

path to the external database and the XLookup will fail. So if you keep programming like this, you are forced to run Q&A in the "old-fashioned" central-install-on-the-server way using Network Packs. Q&A is best run from the local PC, just like Microsoft Word or any other application, and with the temp files stored locally as well.

Of these three options, the only one I would recommend is the second one where you specify just the database name. This means that all your databases must be in the same directory, which must be the default data path as specified in Global Options.

The advantages of doing so are manifold. Not least of these is that your databases are *transportable*. If you decide that you want to move the data to another location, you just do it, then simply change the default data path on each PC. No reprogramming. Taking copies of your databases home with you on a Zip disk to work on them over the weekend then becomes a simple matter as well.

XLookups in Sesame

Then there are the *Sesame* advantages to consider. How will *Sesame* handle XLookups? Will it need them at all if you use sub-forms in place of XLookup programming? (See "*Sesame* Form and Subform Capabilities Compared to Q&A" on page 10.) Don't worry about the latter. All the new *Sesame* features, such as sub-forms, are *in addition* to existing Q&A programming techniques and options that will continue to be supported. So, import a couple of Q&A databases into *Sesame* and guess what?—the XLookups will work as before. Although the exact stipulations on this are yet to be finalised, it is still in your best interest to simplify your XLookup programming as I've described. Let me explain.

A Q&A database consists of one form of up to 10 pages in length. The fields you put on that form define what information you plan to enter into each record in that particular database. Each Q&A database represents a different type of record that you want to enter, for example, Customers, Orders, Products. Q&A for Windows adds multiple forms-per-database capabilities. Each such form can show any or all of the fields in the database, but they all show parts of the same record. In Q&A for Windows, the Products database may have two forms. One that shows costs and profit margins (for manager) and another that shows only selling prices (for order takers). Both forms still show information about the same type of record—Products.

Remembering that the "X" in XLookup stands for "external," the major difference is what *Sesame* considers external. *Sesame* allows you to have more than one type of record each sesame database. This means you have some options.

The Slow but Low-Impact Way: You can leave things just as they are by translating each of your Q&A databases into a separate *Sesame* database. If you had three Q&A databases (Customer, Order, Products), you now have

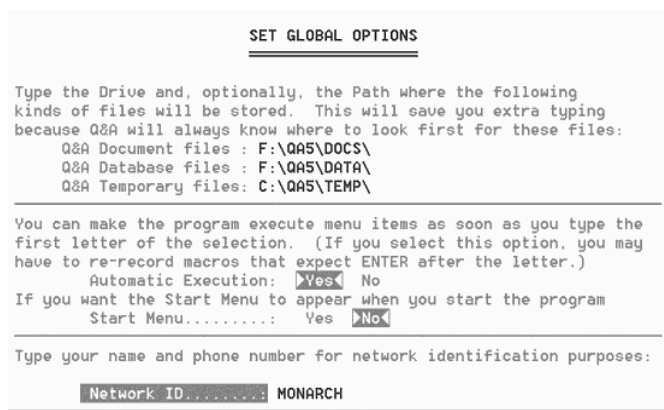


Figure 1. Setting the default database path at the Utilities / Set Global Options screen.

Continues on page 8



Duplicating Records and @Number

I need to duplicate almost all of the data in certain records. For example, a customer wants to duplicate his last order. I just search for his last order, press Shift-F10, select *Add Data* then press the Shift-F5 record ditto key. The only problem with this is that I have an order number field that is generated by the @Number function. Whenever I use the Shift-F5, it duplicates the earlier record, but it also overwrites the new record order number with the old one. Is there any way that I can keep the new order number and duplicate the rest of the fields?

Colin

Using a little known Q&A feature will do just that. In addition, you can actually save some keystrokes in your routine. Go to *File / Design File / Program a file / Read Only Fields* and make your order number field Read-Only by typing an "R" in it and pressing F-10. Make sure that the @Number function in that field is set as an *Initial Value (File / Design / Customize / Set Initial Values)*. When Q&A copies fields with Shift-F5 or other copy functions, it does *not* copy read-only fields. It treats them as non-existent. Accordingly, if you copy the entire record into a new record and the initial value feature has already assigned a new order number, you will have a full copy of your old order but with a new order number.

Now, to save some keystrokes. Instead of pressing *Shift-F10*, selecting *Add Data* and pressing *Enter* (at least three keystrokes) simply press *Ctrl-F6* from your old record and you will be in *Add Data* mode in a new record.

Nameless Faces (Invisible Fields)

Is there an easy way to add fields to a database without assigning a name to each one? I think I did it in the past but I've forgotten how.

Harold

You can absolutely do this—and it is an extremely handy feature. The method is different depending on the version of Q&A you are using, but the results are the same.

In Q&A for DOS there are two methods, with each giving you a slightly different form appearance. If you

want a field without a corresponding label, but still want to see where it starts, simply place a colon (:) on the form design screen. (You can optionally define the end of the field by typing a *greater than* sign (>) at the end. This will give you a field with no label—all you'll see is the colon where the field begins.

If you want a totally invisible field (except when you move into it or it contains data), start the field with a *less than* sign (<) and end it with a *greater than* sign (>). The benefit of this is that you can create good looking line-item tables when you combine the fields with line draw:

Part #	Description	Qty	Price
< >	< >	< >	< >
< >	< >	< >	< >
< >	< >	< >	< >

Here, the fields surrounded by the "<" and ">" don't show until you tab to them or have data into them. Q&A will assign internal field *names* (as opposed to field *labels*) to each of these unlabelled fields, in numeric order of establishment, such as *F0001*, *F0002*, and so forth.

In Q&A for Windows the procedure is slightly different but the results can be made to appear exactly the same. First, you add a new field by assigning it a name—any name you want. Then, you select *Design Input Forms* from the *Select* Menu. You will see that the fields and the labels are actually separate items. Click on a field name to select it and press the *Delete* key. The field name will disappear and leave you with just the field. You can then move the actual fields around, placing them wherever you want them on the form. If you look in the database structure, you will see that the field is still named whatever you originally named it, but there will be no title showing on the form.

Creating Reports from Multi-Line Databases

I have a problem that I just can't seem to work out. I created an invoice database in Q&A for DOS with multiple item lines. A customer can order up to 15 items on each invoice. Each line contains the item number, its price, the quantity ordered, and total amount. This works out fine for data entry



Stumped?

Send your Q&A questions to @Help, The Quick Answer, Marble Publications, Inc., 1927A Harbor Blvd, Costa Mesa, CA 92627 or email to mailbox@quickanswer.com. Include your name, address, phone, and your

Q&A version number (and whether DOS or Windows) and a detailed description of the problem. We'll publish those questions we feel are of general reader interest; individual responses aren't possible.

and searching and we can simply print the entire record as a receipt for the customer. The problem arises when I need to print reports. Since I have 15 separate lines for the items, I don't know on which line any specific item is located. Therefore, I can't create reports showing which items are the best sellers, which were sold to whom, or even the total sales for any specific item. Is there any way to accomplish what I need to do?

Jack

If you are using Q&A for DOS, there is a way to accomplish what you want to do. The up-front work is significant, but once done, your reports will be easy and quick. You must create a new interim or temporary database that stores each of the order lines in a single record. Then you must copy the individual line data from the original invoice database into this new database. From there, you will be able to run all your reports.

Let's assume that your invoice database contains at least the following fields at the top of the form:

```
Customer Number (or Name)
Date of Sale
Invoice Number
```

For each line item we know you have the following:

```
Item #
Description
Quantity
Price
```

Create a new database called **Lines-MT.dtf** with the following fields in the order shown:

```
Customer Number (Text)
Date of Sale (Date)
Invoice Number (Text)
Item # (Text)
Description (Text)
Quantity (Number)
Price (Money)
Date of Last Update (Date)
```

When you are finished designing this database, copy it (design only) to another database named *Lines.dtf*. You will now have two *new* databases and you are half-way there.

In your invoice database create *and save* 15 Retrieve Specs named *Line1*, *Line2*, *Line3*, through *Line15*. The Retrieve Spec for *Line1* is simply a ">0" in the **Quantity** field of the *first* line-item.

For *Line2*, it's a ">0" in the **Quantity** field of the *second* line-item. Repeat this until you have created all 15 Retrieve Specs.

Now, select *File / Utilities / Copy / Copy Selected Records* from the

Q&A menus as if you were going to copy from *Invoice.dtf* to *Lines.dtf*. You will *not* complete this operation. At the Retrieve Spec, press F10. At the Merge Spec type the following numbers in the listed fields:

```
Customer Number: 1
Date of Sale: 2
Invoice Number: 3
Item # (Line 1): 4
Description (Line 1): 5
Quantity (Line 1): 6
Price (Line 1): 7
```

When you've done so, press Shift-F8, save the Spec as *Line1* and press Enter. Immediately change the Spec so that the numbers 4 through 7 appear on line item 2 instead of 1 and press Shift-F8 to save this Spec as *Line2*. Repeat this procedure until you have done the same for all 15 lines and have saved 15 Specs. Now, press Esc and tell Q&A that you want to cancel the operation.

For the last part, you will record or write a macro that will create your new database and copy the information to it. This macro will perform the following steps:

1. Copy the *Lines-Mt.DTF* database to *Lines.DTF* database and always overwrite it. This will always create a new line item database for you.
2. Copy all of the individual line items, with the information about the sale, to the new database.
3. Mass Update the *Lines.Dtf* database with today's date in the last field so that you know when it was created.

Listing 1 below shows a sample macro.

Let's look at just one line in the macro: *C<capsf4>Invoice<enter>S<capsf4>Lines<enter>* will copy selected records from invoice.dtf to lines.dtf; *<altf8>line(n)<enter><F10>* will copy only the data on line *n*; *<altf8>Line(n)<enter><f10>N* will put it in the correct place. The macro has some extra *N*'s in it to account for the fact that some invoice database records won't have all 15 of the line-items filled.

Make sure when you run this macro that no one is using the invoice database. Also make sure to set this up and try it on a *copy* of your databases before permanently implementing the procedure. What you will wind up with

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```
<begdef><nokey><name>"Lines<sp>Data" <vidon><esc><esc><esc>FS<capsf4><enter>
Lines-MT<f5><capsf4>Lines<enter>Y<esc><esc>C<capsf4>Invoice<enter>S<capsf4>Lines<enter>
<altf8>Line1<enter><f10><altf8>Line1<enter><f10>NC<enter>S<capsf4>Lines<enter>
<altf8>Line2<enter><f10><altf8>Line2<enter><f10>NC<enter>S<capsf4>Lines<enter>
<altf8>Line3<enter><f10><altf8>Line3<enter><f10>NC<enter>S<capsf4>Lines<enter>
<altf8>Line4<enter><f10><altf8>Line4<enter><f10>NC<enter>S<capsf4>Lines<enter>
<altf8>Line5<enter><f10><altf8>Line5<enter><f10>NC<enter>S<capsf4>Lines<enter>
...
<altf8>Line15<enter><f10><altf8>Line15<enter><f10>N<esc><esc><esc>
FM<capsf4>Lines<enter><f10><end><end><end>#1=@Date<f10>N<esc><esc><enddef>
```

Listing 1. Portion of a sample macro to copy line-items from an invoice database to a supplementary database.

three *Sesame* databases. XLookups in these database will be truly external, meaning that *Sesame* will need to look at another *Sesame* database to find the information you want.

The Much Faster But You Have to Think About It a Little Way: You can create one *Sesame* database (MyWholeShop.db) and import all three of your Q&A databases into it. Now you have one *Sesame* database (MyWholeShop) that can work with all three different types of your records. Your XLookups can still be XLookups, but *Sesame* won't need to look outside the current database for the information. It only has to look at one of its other types of records.

So, "putting all your eggs in one basket" and stripping full pathnames from your XLookup programming will give you benefits now and mean that your databases are ready for conversion to run in *Sesame* in the optimal way.

Changing full pathnames to no pathnames

If your databases are programmed with full XLookup pathnames, it may be because you are storing your databases in multiple directories. If you make any change to this set-up then you need to:

1. Remove the pathnames from your XLookups.
2. Move all your databases to the same directory.
3. Make sure that directory is the default data path in Global Options.

All of this needs to be done at the same time—you cannot do it in stages. This may present problems if you are in the (uncommon) situation of having many heavily-programmed databases spread across a variety of locations on your PC or network. I have only seen this twice. One client I've already remedied. They had a few dozen databases and it took me two days. The second is still pending. They have hundreds of databases in a staggering 63 directories! In each case the databases were not programmed by me and so it was a "search-and-amend" exercise.

If you find yourself in this situation, you may have to do what I did:

1. Make copies of all the databases.
2. Amend the programming in the copies while staff continue to work with the databases.
3. When all re-programming is done, put blank copies of the newly-programmed databases into a new location on the server.
4. Copy the records from the "old" databases into the newly-programmed ones.

5. Change the default data path on each PC.

(Items 4 and 5 need to be done in one hit when no staff are using the databases.)

Checking your XLookup programming

If you have just a few databases with a few programming statements in each one, it's an easy matter to view the programming and see whether you are using full pathnames or not.

However, if you have quite a number of heavily-programmed databases, then it won't be so easy to check all the programming. Help is at hand though—you don't have to check the programming manually on a field-by-field basis. There are a couple of techniques that make it much easier.

John Dow's DTF SPECS

This utility is a Q&A programmer's tool (available at www.johntdow.com). Among other things, it provides a "data dictionary" of a Q&A database and allows you to view and optionally print all the programming. Furthermore, you can search through all the programming in the whole database in one go. What to search for? Well, you could search for "XL". This would find all XLookup commands whether written in the full or abbreviated form (XLU, XLR, @XLU or @XLR). You could easily see then in what form the XLookups have been written. However, all you really need to do is to find the XLookups with full pathnames. To do this, you would search for the backslash character ("\"). You can note which field the programming is in, then switch to Q&A, amend the programming, and switch back to DTF SPECS to find the next occurrence. Afterward, you can run DTF SPECS on the database again to make sure there are no pathnames you missed.

Printing Q&A programming to a file

If you don't have DTF SPECS, you can achieve much the same thing just using Q&A for DOS. Suppose you want to check the programming in Customer.dtf:

1. Select File / Design / Program / Customer.dtf / Program Form.
2. At the Program Spec, press F2 (Print).
3. At the Print Options screen, select Print to Disk.
4. At the Print Disk menu, select I - IBM ASCII format.
5. Specify a filename such as *Customer.pgm* and save in your default Q&A document directory.

Use these Print Options settings:

```
Print to..... DISK
Print field labels?..... Yes
Print expanded fields?..... Yes
```

You can now open this file either in Q&A Write or a word processor such as Microsoft Word, and search for full pathnames. How you perform your search depends on which word processor you use.

Using Q&A Write (DOS) to search the programming

1. From the Q&A Main menu, select Write / Get, and type in Customer.pgm.
2. Confirm the document type is ASCII if prompted.
3. Press the F7 Search key.
4. To search for All XLookups, search text is "XL" (without the quotes).

To search for pathnames, you need to search for the backslash character. If you try to do so, it won't work because a backslash in Q&A searching is a special character. You need to enter two backslashes in a row (that is, a literal backslash): \\.

5. In either case you must press Page Down at the Search Dialog box to display more options and select Type: *Text* rather than the *Whole Words* default. See Figure 2.

With the Method set to *Manual*, Q&A will stop at each occurrence. You can see the field name because you set your print options to *Print Field Labels*. You press F7 again to find the next occurrence.

Using Q&A Write will preclude having the programming document open at the same time as the database. If you have two versions of Q&A, say Q&A 5.0 and Q&A 4.0, or DOS and Windows versions, then you can use the other version simultaneously for the word processor work. (Q&A Write 4.0 is file-compatible with Q&A Write 5.0). Or you could install another copy of Q&A in another directory just for this exercise.

Using MS Word to search the programming

1. Select File / Open, then find and select Customer.pgm. Set *Files of Type* to "All Files" at the File Open dialog.
2. Confirm that the file type is *Text Only* or *MS-DOS Text*.
3. Select Edit / Find.

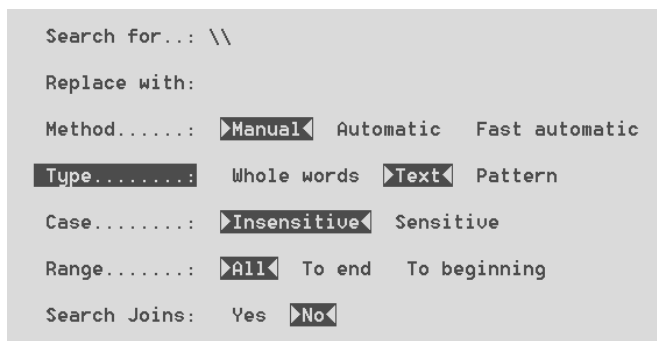


Figure 2. Q&A Write's Search & Replace Dialog. Set the Type to "Text."

To search for all XLookups, the search text is "XL" (without the quotes).

To search for a backslash, simply type the backslash character (\).

Q&A for Windows

Unlike Q&A for DOS, Q&A for Windows gives you no way to print out a complete Program Spec for a database. If you have heavily programmed Q&A for Windows databases and have the interoperability patch installed that lets you also open them in Q&A for DOS (assuming you *have* Q&A for DOS), then you can use Q&A for DOS to print your programming. Otherwise, your best bet is to get DTFSECS and use it to print your Program Specs.

Conclusion

Now is the time to check that you're not using full pathnames in your Q&A programming. If you are, you'll be doing yourself a big favour by correcting this now. You might be forced to undertake some serious "housekeeping" or file management. If so, do it carefully after first having made a full backup of all your data onto a local drive. The effort will be worthwhile. Your system will then be more flexible and you will be ready to convert to optimised *Sesame* databases in due course.

Alec Mulvey is a director of Lantica Software, LLC and also owns Keyword Training & Consultancy in Ascot, near London, England. Alec has been building Q&A applications and training clients for 11 years. Keyword Training is the UK distributor for the International English edition of Q&A. alec@keywordtraining.com, www.keywordtraining.com.

Eagerly Awaiting *Sesame*

Date: Sun, 25 Nov 2001
To: tmarcellus@lantica.com
Subject: Feedback

I have used Q&A for 12 years and have reluctantly tried out Access, Approach and Filemaker in hopes of finding a windows database I could migrate to and remarket my existing database applications. None of the aforementioned seem to fit the bill. They are either too simple or too complex (Access). Out of impulse I typed "Q&A database" in Google and quickly found quickanswer.com and lantica.com. I couldn't believe it was true.

If I understand correctly, you will have a Windows relational Q&A-like product in beta any day and a market version sometime soon in 2002.

Thank you. I truly hope you can sell thousands of copies so you can succeed as a business.

—Martin Reid, QEF Consulting Services, Hamilton, Ontario

Quick Tip

A Handy Dandy Image Viewer for Q&A

5.0

My Q&A 5.0 database of friends and family includes a field for the filename of a photo of the person. I wanted to set things up so that while viewing a record, I could click on this field and have an image viewer pop-up in the top left-hand corner of the monitor and display the photo. I've been on the lookout for a "small footprint" freeware viewer program that would do this—one that can handle all the common image file formats such as bmp, jpg, gif and tif.

I found one. It's called "SlowView" (funny name, eh?). It runs in Windows 95 or later, it isn't slow, and you can download it for free at www.shareware.com. (Search on "slowview.exe")

SlowView accepts an image filename as a startup command line parameter, so you can use @Shell to start it and automatically display the image file you want. And you can set it to always display in the same screen location and in the window size you want (about 2" x 2" is my preference for head shots). Also, you can tell it to always auto-size the image to that window size, which is terrific since you sure don't want to resize all your image files.

You simply start SlowView, size its window, then drag the window to where you want it to always open. You then pull down the **View** menu and select (1) *Fit Image to Window*, (2) *Use Last Windowposition/Size*, and (3) *Save Current Windowposition/Size*.

In your database, you need a field that contains the path to the image file, such as `d:\graphics\people\dearmom.jpg`, along with an @Shell program to launch SlowView and load the photo. An @Shell program in a **Photo Path** field might look like this:

```
< If Photo Path <> "" Then {
  @Msg(@Shell("d:\slowview\slowview.exe " +
  @Chr(34) + Photo Path + @Chr(34))); CHome }
```

When you click on **Photo Path** in a record that contains a photo, the little SlowView window appears right where you expect it, at the size you want, and with the linked photo in it

sized to fit the window. When you press **Esc** (Yes!) to close the SlowView window, you're back in your Q&A record.



Tom
Marcellus

@Help... cont'd from page 7

is a database with a single record for each invoice line item. You can now do any type of search or report, including summaries, by order number, part number, customer or date.

If you have followed the one-time steps above, and have the empty (Lines-Mt) database, you will only be a macro away from up-to-the-minute invoice reports.

Remember, in *Sesame*, since it is a database that allows sub-forms, you will no longer have to do this type of interim conversion. You'll be able to run your reports directly from the invoice database.

Programming Mysteriously Not Working

I have two programming statements that do not work in Q&A 5.0. I'm sure I've written statements like these before and they worked fine. Here's the first one:

```
>#1:If #1="11012" Then #2 = "Optimizing Your  
WWTP" and #4 = "0.6"
```

And here's the second one:

```
>#7: #8 = #5 + "/" + #6 + "/" + #7
```

In the first program, you're using the "and" operator on the wrong side of the statement. You can use "and" on the left side of a conditional statement (*If this = that and this = that Then...*), but not on the right side where you assign your field values when the condition is true. The syntax for your first statement—to update two fields if the single condition is true—should look like this:

```
>#1:If #1 = "11012" Then { #2 = "Optimizing Your  
WWTP"; #4 = "0.6" }
```

Your second statement isn't working because fields #5, #6 and #7 contain numbers (the month number, day number, and year) and you are attempting to concatenate (combine) these values to produce a complete date for field #8. For this to work, you must enclose any number-filled fields in the @Str function to force Q&A to treat them as text values, like this:

```
>#7: #8 = @Str(#5) + "/" + @Str(#6) + "/" +  
@Str(#7)
```

—TM

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Becky



Sesame Form and Subform Capabilities Compared to Q&A

We've received a considerable number of questions as to just what the mechanism and procedures will be in *Sesame* for making use of its powerful Form/Subform capabilities. These are best answered with an example.

The traditional Q&A approach

Suppose you need to set up the classical customer Sales application. In Q&A, this would probably consist of three separate databases:

Customer.dtf
Inventry.dtf
Sales.dtf

The Customer database would contain basic information about each customer, such as their address, contact information and a unique Customer Number or ID.

The Inventory database would contain basic information about each inventory item that you sell, like pricing, description and unique Inventory Item Number.

The Sales database would be a large, complex form with lots of fields.

In one section, the Sales database would have a field for the customer number. You'd enter the customer number and your Q&A programming would perform an XLookup to Customer to retrieve the name, address and other pertinent data about the customer for the current Sales record.

Another section would have a fixed number of lines on which you would enter each item the customer was buying. Each line or line-item would have a field for the **Item Number, Description, Quantity Ordered, Price, Extended Amount**, and so forth. You'd enter an item number and your programming would perform an XLookup to Inventory and retrieve the description, price and other pertinent data about the item for the current line in the current sales record. Of course, you could have some fancy additional programming to display pop-up lists, perform automatic calculations, and the like. In any case, in most Sales orders, you wouldn't use all the lines in this section. For Sales orders containing more items than the fixed number of lines available in the form, you'd create multiple records.

You might also have a section in this database for the sale totals, where all the line items were totaled, along with fields for shipping cost, shipping method, sales tax, and the like.

Optional *Sesame* approaches

For first-time users, or those upgrading from their Q&A databases, *Sesame* can be set up exactly the same way! No difference in

what you are used to doing!

However, if you want to take advantage of *Sesame's* subform capabilities, the setup will be somewhat different. There will be the same three kinds of records:

Customer
Inventory
Sales

But they will all be contained in the same *Sesame* database.

In addition, there would be a *fourth* kind of record—called *LinItems*. You'd set up *LinItems* as a subform or "child" of the Sales form. This way, Sales would be a much simpler record structure, containing fields only for the customer information and the sale total information. The *LinItems* records would also be very simple, containing fields for **Item Number, Description, Quantity Sold** and **Price**. There is no need to have a field for Sale Number to link the *LinItems* to the sale. This will be done automatically as you enter your sales. You can include the Sale Number on the *LinItem*, but it won't be required.

This way, instead of having to enter anything about the customer to do a lookup, you will simply select the customer from a drop-down list that is linked to Customer. *Sesame* will then look to Customer to get the rest of the information. These lookups can be set up either to keep the current customer information permanently with the sale (static, using XLookup), or to automatically show the current customer information each time you view the sale record (dynamic).

So, you've selected the Customer for this Sale, and you're now ready to enter the items sold.

To do this, you move into the *LinItems* subform and fill out the first record. You can enter the Item in the same manner as you did the Customer, by selecting from a list of items drawn from Inventory. *Sesame* can then look up that item's current description and pricing information. You enter only the number of line-items that you actually need. If you're selling only three items on this sales order, you add three subrecords. If it's 50 items, you add 50 subrecords. If it's 1000 items, you add 1000 subrecords. When you save the sale, all of its *LinItems* will automatically be saved with it and all the *LinItems* will be linked to their sale. There will be some retraining here for Q&A users, but the benefits should be apparent.

Once you've entered all your *LinItems*, you return to the main Sale form and enter your shipping charges, sales tax, and so forth (or have *Sesame* automatically calculate it). That completes the sales order.

Concludes next page...

You will now be able to get reports of how many people bought widget **xyz** by simply retrieving **xyz** in the Lineltem subform, without regard to what line it appeared on in the order.

But here's where things may appear a bit strange to Q&A users. Searching for **P.** in a City subform of States could bring up a record showing the State Pennsylvania and the City Altoona. Altoona starts with "A" not "P": What is happening? Subform searching works this way. *Sesame*, like Q&A, is form-based. When you specify retrieve criteria in a subform, you are asking the system to find all of the parent forms with at least one subform that meets your request. Therefore, Pennsylvania is correct since both Pittsburgh and Philadelphia are somewhere in the city forms for that state. This allows you to retrieve the entire Sale and all of its Lineltems for any sale where widget **xyz** was sold. If needed, you can use reports, or search the Lineltems subform by itself (outside of its parent form) to be more subform-centric about the information you retrieve.

To sum up, information in *Sesame* forms can be kept static or made dynamic. Individual Sales line-item reports can be run right from the Sales form. Line-items will be virtually unlimited and can be presented in a scrolling window. So, it's some of what you do now and some new stuff to get you a better, more efficient database.

Subscription Change. . . cont'd from page 2

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