

VISUAL VAULT KEEPER

BY: SCOTT BIDWELL

The long awaited release of Visual Vault Keeper (VVK) has arrived. VVK provides accurate and secure management of your customer's offsite tape media, while providing the flexibility to deal with the unique challenges of the "offsite vaulting world."

Like Visual Corporate Keeper, VVK was re-engineered from the ground up, utilizing the core business rules of its predecessor, Vault Keeper, and is a true 32 bit application. Visual Vault Keeper easily integrates with Visual Corporate Keeper, eliminating the need to develop bridges to and from other applications. Billing is managed from Visual Corporate Keeper, by utilizing Charted Work Orders, which also manages the schedule of daily, weekly or monthly rotations and deliveries.

Here are a few key benefits that continue to designate Visual Vault Keeper and ASI as leaders in the industry:

- ◆ Improves the number of tapes processed in an hour because the application of a records center barcode is not needed. This also lessens the possibility of errors and maintains an audit

trail from the client's site to the offsite facility.

- ◆ Performs audits of customer's tapes quickly, easily and most importantly – accurately, by utilizing integrated barcode scanner technology. (Tri-optic labels are not a problem)
- ◆ Serves multiple clients, as well as clients with multiple vaults, using existing volume serial number barcode labels to verify the transfer of tapes from customer site to the offsite facility. This is extremely valuable as it provides an accurate rotation history for every tape.
- ◆ Receives electronic transmissions directly from your customer's TMS (tape management system), improving the rotation turn around times, and enabling the records center to scan verify the de-

- ◆ Accommodates non-TMS tapes via its own auto-slotting capabilities, assuring maximum utilization of available space in the vault. Gives the records center the ability to track descriptions, and return dates for items going to scratch status, and automatically process the withdrawal for items returning to your customer.

In short, Visual Vault Keeper was designed to manage thousands of transactions daily, specifically for the unique challenges of operating an offsite vault. Contact us today for more information about how Visual Vault Keeper and our family of proven ASI information management software solutions can work for you.



Tips & Tricks for VCK

Just Ask! is everyone's favorite searching tool and we just made it even better!

To perform a "contains in" search where you know the beginning value use the ! followed by the beginning characters of what you are looking for and end it with the %. For example, if you wanted to find all records that begin with 8818 in the Customer File Id field you would enter !8818% and click the Search button.

Using these wild cards when you know the beginning value will enhance the performance of the search.

Inside this issue:

Electronic Billing	2
Frequently Asked ?'s	2
Users Seminar	3
Improvement Paradox	4
Webology 101	6

Special points of interest:

- Tips & Tricks
- Electronic Billing
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Webology 101
- Message from the Newsletter Team

Electronic Billing

By: Berni Hlivyak

The mere sound of those words is enough to send grown men and women screaming and running for the hills. It seems to say, "be afraid...be very afraid".

S T O P! There is nothing to fear but fear itself. In fact electronic billing can not only make your life easier, it provides a multitude of benefits to you and your customers. I remember the first time we sent out e-billing. We finished all work orders for the billing period, printed out some reports to verify charges, pressed the Enter key, pushed my chair back, threw my feet up on the desk and proceeded to "watch" the invoices go out across the miles. After the e-billing was completed, I printed out the few paper invoices for mailing and my job was done.

There are many pluses to using electronic billing (paperless invoicing): 1)save on toner and paper, 2)save on postage, 3)no need to fold and stuff envelopes, 4)no chance for the invoice to get "lost in the mail", 5)customers immediately have your invoice and 6) much to our surprise, our customers were paying faster. Of course we never have problems with collections from our customers. Another advantage to e-billing, is the fact customers can call you as soon as they receive the invoice should they have any questions. You can make any corrections if necessary and immediately send them a corrected invoice.

Tips & Tricks for VCK



File Retrieval — Enter a question mark (?) into the File Barcode Id field in a work order to bring up the Quick Data Entry Form. This form allows you to add a new file by either auto-assigning or manually assigning the file barcode number.

Approximately 94% of all ASI's customers receive invoices electronically and the feedback has been very positive. Customers can forward the invoice to any number of additional individuals for approval, print out just the information they need for approval, and store the invoice electronically for future reference.

The majority of people face change with some trepidation, but sometimes change can bring positive results and we believe e-billing is one of those changes. For more information on setting up E-billing, please contact our support team.

Frequently Asked Questions

By: Brian Chivers

My wand is locked up and says "PROGRAMFAILED" or my wand's screen is blank?

A majority of all wand problems can be corrected by one of the following fixes.

The first fix...Replace the battery pack.

Before installing the fresh battery pack verify the two small switches are set to the "up" position. If the switches are in the down position, use a pen tip to move them to the up position. Finally, insert the pack and check to see if wand operates normally.

The second fix..."Cold start" the wand.

Open the battery compartment and pull the battery unit partially out of the wand. Locate the alpha and enter keys on the wand's keyboard and position your fingers on those two keys. Push the battery unit back into place, while holding the Alpha and Enter keys down--this action has to be simultaneous. You should hear a double-beep. Enter the date and time to proceed to the main menu. This action results in a loss of scans, but clears up the majority of most wand problems.

The third fix...Reprogram the Wand.

Connect the wand to its transfer cable or set it in the dock station. Open Windows explorer and locate the PercProg application that resides under the Wands folder within the VCK directory on whichever network drive your record center utilizes. Make sure the Settings under Options reflect the correct com port. Choose File and select Open. Click on the file in the left window that ends with .hex and choose OK. (If the PercProg application or hex file does not appear in the Wands directory contact ASI for assistance). If the first attempt does not begin the operation, click Abort then choose File and select Program the Portable to repeat the process. Note: It is not uncommon to need to repeat this step several times before reprogramming begins.

After trying all of these steps and no correction has been validated, notify ASI to discuss shipping the wand for maintenance.

For more answers to your frequently asked questions visit our website at <http://www.andrewssoftware.com> and click on the "ASI USERS" link. Enter your login and password. To receive your password, please contact ASI customer support or send an email to <mailto:support@andrewssoftware.com>.



2003 Users Seminar Recap

By: Jennifer Fröhlich

The 2003 ASI Users Seminar, once again, proved to be a great success. Attendance remained high and we received positive feedback from all of you regarding the focus group sessions and guest speakers. Thanks to all of you that supported and made it the success that it was.

We genuinely hope you found it a worthwhile experience and everyone managed to gain something from it. Judging from the feedback we received that certainly seemed the case. Here's what some of the users had to say...

"I felt the focus group sessions were great, because it gave us much needed 'one-on-one' time with the Andrew's personnel and gave us opportunities to ask questions or address issues we were/are having with VCK."

"This years seminar was a great mix of users as well as management skills."

"EDUCATIONAL!"

"Please repeat Focus Group Sessions next year."

"All the planning and hard work paid off....Great Seminar!"

We also would like to thank all of you who participated in the feedback survey. The suggestions for next years seminar regarding subjects, venues and so on will be at the top of the list when planning next years seminar. Our goal is to tailor the seminar to your needs in an attempt to make it as relevant and productive as possible.

We would like to thank all of you for your continued support and input regarding ASI's family of software products. We will continue to enhance and support the best record center management software out there and we recognize all of you make that possible.

May each and everyone of you have a happy and prosperous new year. Enjoy the photos!!



^ April Ryan, Peak Planning and Jason Kaplitz, Stoney Creek Shredding.



^ Elliot Reventos, DSC Puerto Rico, Barb Shipley & Chris Rauch, Corrigan Records Mgmt., Aaron Blizzard, Data Storage Tech. & Lynne Matthews, DSC Bermuda



^ Brian and Konstantin going over Invoicing in one of the Focus Group Sessions.



^ Jeff Meagrow & Marty Hrovat of Andrews Records having lunch with clients from DSC Cincinnati and DSC Indianapolis.



Mark Miller giving a tour of Andrews Destruction Services.



< Pig Roast at Andrews Records Management, Inc.



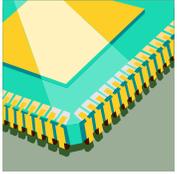
>Part of the ASI Team!!



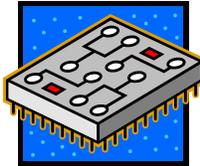
Lee & Scott discussing Sales during a Focus Group Session.

The Improvement Paradox

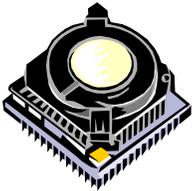
By: Tony Kovalik



Throughout the five years (1999-2003) we've spent developing Visual Corporate Keeper, the PC world has witnessed enormous changes, great upheavals, and a few revolutions along the way. Take operating systems, for instance. When we started, the world was just beginning to embrace Windows 98. In fact, most of our original work station installations were actually on Windows 95 machines. And from there, we've experienced upgrades and installs onto Windows 98 Second Edition, Windows 2000, Windows ME, and Windows XP.



As the platform changed, so did our underlying coding language. All the original coding for the VCK application was done in Microsoft Visual FoxPro 6.0. Back in 1998, this was a brand new version of a product that had been purchased by Microsoft 6 years previous and already revised on 3 earlier occasions. In the last two years, as most of you already know, FoxPro has been upgraded twice, from 6.0 to 7.0 and now to 8.0. Unfortunately, simply stating the number incrementation does not reveal the true significance of the changes.



Beyond the software (or should I say underneath), the machines themselves have undergone remarkable performance improvements and architecture changes. Back in 1998, a new desktop machine came standard with a 450 MHz CPU. Today, you can go to Best Buy and pick up, off the shelf, an on-sale PC that comes with a 3 GHz chip. What a vast chasm of difference* between computers purchased just 5 years apart? And that's a difference only in CPU speed. It would take a few newsletters to outline the changes that have been made in the same interval to chip architecture, video cards, mother boards, network cards, media storage, and all the other on board devices that impact the way our software runs.

As technology changes, we anticipate improved performance, greater accuracy, and fewer problems. Theoretically, these are reasonable expectations that are generally born out in reality. What few people stop to consider, though, is not only how difficult it can be to balance all the changes as they're happening but what surprising problems can arise amid successive improvements. As the expression goes, "Be careful of what you



wish for because you might just get it." This saying is as applicable to technology as it is to any other aspect of life. For instance, we programmers look forward to faster, more powerful computers. There have been times, however, when the fulfillment of this simple wish has caused more grief in the short term than it was worth.

Not too long ago, we purchased a brand new computer to upgrade one of our server machines. Shortly after, we were getting one error after another. After a lot of head scratching and hair pulling, debugging and testing, we came to the discovery that the new server's processor was running so fast that it was actually too fast. The problem was that a function we had been utilizing for years to acquire a unique file name in which to store temporary query data was being duplicated because it was being called by different users within the same millisecond. Previously, this had been impossible as computers had not been fast enough to complete that operation back to back so quickly. Luckily we were able to isolate the code that had become problematic and fix it almost immediately.



Unfortunately, many of the problems that result from performance and functionality gains are too subtle to be noticed quickly and can sometimes take months to diagnose much less remedy. As improvements have allowed more users to perform operational tasks both faster and simultaneously, we have often found ourselves writing code to address complex multi-user contention issues. As things happen within an application more quickly, each user becomes a more aggressive consumer of system processes and this increased demand can reveal weaknesses in an application that were non-existent in less powerful technology.

In code, we are able to manage situations that arise when users try to access the same resource simultaneously. For instance, if two user's try to update the same unique ID at nearly the exact same time, we can hold off one of the users until the other has moved onto another routine without interrupting the delayed user with an error message or any perceptible hiccup. We accomplish this task by allowing the delayed user to 'reprocess' her request 10 times before the request goes through or the system decides it is no longer worth trying without displaying an error message first. Theoretically, you reach a point where reprocessing 10 times is no longer sufficient as the speed of making the request is such a small frac-

The Paradox Continued

tion of the time it takes to actually perform the content of the request. Put more simply, if it takes a hard disk x number of milliseconds to write a new ID into a table but the time it takes to request making a change



to that ID becomes x/100 number of milliseconds then one delayed user retrying 10 times is seldom going to find that number of reprocesses successful. As processing speeds increase, it becomes the programmer's job to rebalance the application and amend standard operation

procedures to accommodate a changed environment by perhaps reassessing the number of times a request will be reprocessed by resetting that number from 10 to 100.

As often as we hope an upgrade is going to fix a feature with which we've been having a persistent problem, we find the cure to be as bad as the disease. Many early VCK users will remember the regular appearance of the infamous GDI error. Those who have subsequently upgraded their hardware were, of course, pleased to find the occurrence of that error dwindle down to nothing but they were equally disappointed to find a new but similarly offending error firing in its place.



On occasion, we've been guilty of issuing a patch on one problem that becomes a bug in a different context. At least equally, and probably more so, Microsoft will make a change in our programming language or runtime environment that creates adverse side effects. Those users who previously absorbed minor 'corruption' to their tables without any inconvenience before upgrading to our 8.0 product are periodically experiencing downtime because Microsoft's latest version of FoxPro is 'handling' this corruption by making it impossible to re-access the table until this 'corruption' is repaired. Similarly, Microsoft is constantly patching and upgrading operating systems but not always for the best from our perspective. Starting in Windows 98, the OS switch 'enable write behind caching' was true by default. This 'enhancement', designed to optimize disk writing efficiency, introduced a number of problems to our application and many others. Basically, a feature that was implemented by Microsoft to boost performance made saving data a far less reliable task. Once again,

it fell to our programming and support staffs to diagnose and remedy all the problems created by this 'improvement'.

Today, software developers are able to offer richer interfaces and increasingly robust products in a fraction of the time and for comparatively little cost. But maintaining the stability and consistency of these products has become the primary challenge in today's PC environment. Programmers and support staffs alike can be compared to surfers who ride atop the waves of a constantly changing sea trying to guide their product safely to shore. High over the runtime – that rides over the OS – that runs on machine – plugged into a network – on a server box – with a platform of its own, successfully managing today's desktop application can feel like a miraculous balancing act. But watch out, because on computers, like on waves, you won't get started on the small ones but you can expect more wipe outs on the big ones.

Notes:

* The difference is a clock speed of 450,000,000 cycles per second versus 3,000,000,000 cycles per second.

Disclaimer: Tony is not now nor has ever been a surfer, but as a big fan of the Blue Crush, he feels competent to make a contribution to the discourse on this topic.

Word Search

ANNUAL USERS' SEMINAR

E R T B C R T C L A U S I V N Z
 L E V F H Q J Y C Q K G Y Z Q T
 B P T S E F R E B O T C O U C Y
 A E R E P E E K L I X X E L K E
 T E Z R A N I M E S C S E T T Q
 D K I G T E N C A I T V R A S C
 N T A E C R B H N I E A R O H S
 U L M G F C P F O L I O F X D Q
 O U D E G H O N A N P T R Y T T
 R A Q M A K S N I R W R P B O H
 Q V X D E K D N O A E P H X P A
 A V X E U C G C R S W E R D N A
 W P P U O G T E H H N J E C S X
 K E V S K C I R T S P I T I S X
 R I R D V H H S R E W S N A V Z
 E V I T A M R O F N I T Q A H W

CLEVELAND
 TRAINING
 SOFTWARE
 VISUAL
 KEEPER
 QUESTIONS
 ROUNDTABLE
 TIPS&TRICKS

SEMINAR
 ANDREWS
 INFOKEEPER
 CORPORATE
 VAULTKEEPER
 ANSWERS
 INFORMATIVE
 OCTOBERFEST

Webology 101

By: Kevin Baird

Does anyone still use the yellow pages to find a phone number anymore? I haven't picked up the Yellow Book in at least five years. One of the reasons this is, is because a company's website is far more informative than a phone number in a book. Sure, you could call the company and ask them a dozen questions about their services and what they can do for you, but if you decide to call around to a dozen places, it can take all day. Where, with the click of the mouse, you can find most of the information online, and know which places to avoid calling, and those that are going to get you what you need.

Your company's website is probably more important to attracting new customers to your company than you may realize. Nevertheless, the problem that most websites have in getting noticed against the thousands of sites already out there, is a matter of understanding how the customer is supposed to find you.

Most people, in general, will use a search engine, such as <http://www.Google.com> (The #1 search engine on the net today, and the beast that powers Yahoo's search.) and do a search on "Records Center". Of course, this will list off all the Record Centers in the whole world, which is counterproductive. Instead, using a search term combined with a city, such as "Records Center Chicago" may get you closer to what you want. Closer... But not close enough.

The reason for this is that Search Engines are tricky. They have millions of websites to catalog, and trying to organize a search result with three words isn't always easy. But there are ways you can help the Search Engine find your website, and put it closer to the #1 position.

The first thing you should do is to make sure the search engine knows your website exists. There are two ways to go about doing this. The first is to submit your website to the Search Engines and pay a fee in order to be listed. This fee is usually around \$300 for a commercial website, and it doesn't guarantee position. All it really does is add your site to the massive list of websites that get cataloged by the Search Engine. In some cases, this may be necessary to get your website up and recognized as fast as possible, but there is a better way that takes a little more time. Having other websites link to your website is a great way to get noticed by the Search Engines, and it also greatly improves your page ranking. In other words, the more websites that link to your website, the higher up the search rankings your website becomes.

Once the Search Engines are aware of your site, the next important step is to add search terms to your website. For instance, if a customer is typing in "Records Center Chicago" in their search box, you should try to have that term placed on your website. Typically, you would try to add the search terms by saying something such as "Home of the best Records Center in Chicago". This is close enough to what the search engine would be looking for. However, when a search engine is looking for searchable terms during its catalog process, it looks for heading items first. A Heading item is something that is very bold and stands out on your website. This text is typically contained within heading markers such as `<h1>Records Center Chicago</h1>` in html. These are ranked higher than plain text on a search score, greatly moving your website up to the #1 position.

With these two steps, your website can achieve greater visibility, and a much higher rank against your competition. There are, of course, many other tricks and practices that are done to move your website's rank even higher. But unfortunately that information would surpass the limits of this article.

Look here next time, as I plan to write an article on the benefits of personal scanning.



Did You Know?

The first product to have a bar code was Wrigley's gum.

A Message from Your Newsletter Team!!

We welcome any and all comments or suggestions regarding the newsletter.

Let us know if there is a topic you would like us to cover. Please e-mail us at <mailto:newsletterteam@andrewssoftware.com>.

Thanks!

Your Newsletter Team includes:
Jennifer, Brian,
Jim, Patty, Tony
& Richard



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