



CHALLENGE TO REACH THE END USER

Late Papers

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"DFS an Alternative to VPLUS"

J. Cybulski

P. Darbyshire

R.M.I.T.

DFS an Alternative to VPLUS

Abstract

DFS (Display Facility Software) is a screen handler developed at RMIT to allow on-line forms handling on a variety of terminals.

The package offers most of the standard facilities available on other screen (or form) handling systems, but it also possesses the unique capability of defining terminal characteristics. This permits the inclusion of new types of terminals in the system configuration, without compatibility constraints, allowing choice from a wider selection of terminal makes and prices.

The benchmarks of the DFS system proved it to be an efficient, flexible and robust tool; and these qualities are assured by screen-forms compilation, data compression, cursor movement optimization and table driven logic.

Certainly DFS is a cost-effective alternative to Hewlett-Packard's VPLUS which offers huge operational capabilities but which also ties users to the expensive HP terminals.

Philosophy of Writing Screen Handlers

Everybody uses screen handlers. Screen handlers are an important tool in writing fashionable software. User-psychology has been put on a pedestal in current Computing and therefore new techniques and methodologies in man-machine interfacing have appeared on the lucrative software market: natural language interfaces, voice analysers and synthesizers, graphics input and output devices like a light-pen, a mouse, digitising tablets, high resolution terminals with sophisticated software in form of windows, spreadsheets, forms, gadgets, knick-knacks, gadgets, gadgets. We call it computer education of the computer user, and we have taught him or her to demand high standards and to feel free and comfortable with computers.

Wherever you turn, you see the glamour of available software tools, shiny and polished packages, intelligent peripherals, all of which you would love to have in your computer business, all of which you would buy immediately if you could disregard their cost and your company's emptying pockets, if you could forget about the software conversions and hardware upgrades which are inevitable to support those little wonders.

On the other hand you know that the software market is a harsh battlefield, which offers but also demands high quality. You are already in a catch-22: you must produce those "user-friendly" toys to get a high profit, but to do so you must also make an investment in appropriate, usually expensive tools.

Ok, you cannot afford the fantastic Artificial Intelligence "Expert Systems" which would do whatever you request, neither you can buy the

