Acquisitions with DB Master

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How many times have you discovered that your library just purchased an unnecessary duplicate copy of a book and vowed "Some day when I get time, I'm going to come up with a way of preventing this from happening!"? Well, a sentiment like that is partly what prompted me to come up with a primitive book ordering system utilizing DB MASTER by Stoneware Microcomputer Products. In order to spare those of you with millions of things to do some wasted time, let me say right now that the results have not been perfect (we still occasionally duplicate titles). For those of you who suffer from insomnia or an utter lack of better things to do, read on and I will try to explain what we have accomplished and how it is all done.

The first step in automating any process is to examine the process and decide what it is you wish to accomplish and whom you wish to do the job. You might well look at the way you are currently ordering material and ask: Do we REALLY need 16 copies of everything or could we reduce it to say 14? This really isn't the way I did it, but it is the way it should be done.

Next, you should examine available software programs to see if they can handle the number of items you might create (amount of storage required), check on the reputation of the manufacturer and dealer, and compare the difficulty in learning to operate the program and its adaptability to your needs. I also did not really do this, but do as I say and not as I did.

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If you should be so lucky as to know a little old lady down the block who owns a lot of computer programs or sells them and lets you open them and run them on her computer to test their ease of use and suitability, please let me know her name, address, and vital statistics. If you live in the real world and must, instead, make a trip to a highly commercial computer store or order from a catalog, then you face dilemmas in evaluating programs which we faced several months ago. You can search for program evaluations in current literature. The trouble with that approach is that you will not find the perfect program which does everything you wish, costs what you can afford, is without bugs or flaws, and is available by anything other than special order. The evaluations will give you food for thought.

Notice I haven't mentioned the computer yet? Well, in the ideal world you buy the software first and then "find" the computer to run it on. Now I have conducted intensive searches (Boolean and otherwise) through meadows, woods, and every other logical place and have yet to just "find" the first computer. Perhaps they haven't been in season when I have looked. Some of us will have the computer first for some reason or other and perhaps have even had to purchase it and will then be looking for programs to run on it. For those of you who are novices, please be warned that a program designed for one brand of computer probably will NOT run on another brand even though they both speak the same language (BASIC, PASCAL, FORTRAN, etc.). Just think of it like English., Ever hear a Cockney, Southerner, and Jamaican try to communicate? You may even have the right brand and still not have the ingredients to make soup. Apple III programs will not run on Apple II and a program designed for an Apple II with 48K and 16K RAMcard will not run on an Apple II without some expenditure of money for the card.

When you are ready to make that trip to the computer store, have an idea of how many titles you will want on the database at any given time and how many characters of information you wish to store about an average title. Then as you have a chance to speak to the salesperson in three-minute bursts, you will have a better chance at speaking his language. The three-minute bursts are because a lot of salespersons have to deal with as many customers and phone calls all at once as a librarian does.

Now if you are still with me, you have the patience of Job and shall be rewarded immediately with a description of our book ordering system using DB MASTER. I first surveyed two or three key

staff members and decided what elements we wanted to be able to identify in any book order. This is the list, Table A, we came up with and a short explanation of each. Remember, the more information you store about each title, the fewer titles you will be able to handle on a diskette, and the longer it will take to manipulate or search the database.

TABLE A

FIELDS

ACQUISITIONS   020283

1257 RECORDS IN FILE

REC.LEN.=267   KEY LEN.=35

No.	FIELD NAME	PRIM KEY	SEC KEY	READ PROT	FIELD TYPE	LEN	Explanation
1	ISBN	YES	NO	NO	ALPHA	15	
2	LAST NAME	YES	NO	NO	ALPHA	20	Author's last name (20 letters).
3	FIRST NAME	NO	NO	NO	ALPHA	15	Author's first name.
4	TITLE	NO	NO	NO	ALPHA	30	
5	TITLE CONT'D.	NO	NO	NO	ALPHA	20	
6	PUBLISHER	NO	NO	NO	ALPHA	12	
7	YR.	NO	NO	NO	INTGR	4	Year of publication.
8	DEALER	NO	NO	NO	ALPHA	8	
9	PRICE	NO	NO	NO	$$$$$	7	
10	NO. COPIES	NO	NO	NO	ALPHA	2	
11	REVIEWS	NO	NO	NO	ALPHA	25	Journal, date, page number.
12	DATE ORDERED	NO	NO	NO	DATE	8	Later, this is date received.
13	ORD. NO	NO	NO	NO	ALPHA	6	
14	STATUS:	NO	NO	NO	ALPHA	20	On order, received, etc.
15	ADULT N-F	NO	NO	NO	$$$$$	7	Space for price for accounting.
16	ADULT F	NO	NO	NO	$$$$$	5	"
17	ADULT REF	NO	NO	NO	$$$$$	6	"
18	AD. A-V	NO	NO	NO	$$$$$	7	"
19	JUV N-F	NO	NO	NO	$$$$$	6	"
20	JUV F	NO	NO	NO	$$$$$	6	"
21	JUV A-V	NO	NO	NO	$$$$$	6	"
22	CALL NO.	NO	NO	NO	ALPHA	12	Completed after cataloging.
23	LOCATION:	NO	NO	NO	ALPHA	12	Indiana Room, Office, etc.
24	LIB. CODE:	NO	NO	NO	ALPHA	12	Our OCLC library code
25	RESERVES? ? ?	NO	NO	NO	ALPHA	8	To alert us for reserves.

After paying over two hundred dollars for a database program, one would assume that good, clearly written instructions would be provided. I hate to put down Stoneware, Inc., BUT it is my own personal theory that their instructions for DB MASTER were written

onto a diskette and then exposed to magnetism which was strong enough to garble everything but not powerful enough to erase the whole thing. Therefore, as a service to librarydom, I shall offer some advice which is intended to supplement the book which comes with the program.

To create a file like ours, you first boot the DB MASTER program diskette in drive one. Answer the questions asked of you and you will be on your way to creating a file. Table A is a listing of our fields and their specifications and will serve as a guide for you. You will undoubtedly wish to modify these to suit your local needs.

We decided that the ISBN would have to be the primary key for our file since author, title, or any other field might be duplicated in our process. Another possibility would be the Library of Congress card number or you might wish to try an acronym code or other device. Just be sure that no two books will have the same code or you will be in trouble. What do we do for books where no ISBN can be found? We use an "X". If we have more than one book with the same author's last name and no ISBN, we go to "XX", "XXX", etc.

Using this system, if you know all or most of an ISBN for a title that you wish information on, you will find the title in two winks of an eyebrow. If you have a small file of say one hundred items or fewer, searches by author, title, or other data will take longer but still be tolerable. When your file gets up to one or two thousand items like ours, you give up on searches other than by ISBN or manual searches of printouts unless you are pretty desperate.

Now for some practical applications using the file you have created. How about a nice bibliography of titles recently received or on order to supplement your card catalog or to send out on the van or to a branch? Easy. Go to the main menu. Tell it that you want selection No. 5 Set up or Print Report. The thing will whir and click and ask "do you wish to create a new format?" For sure the first time you do. YES. Now we need to create the page format. Here is what we use (Table B):

TABLE B

Page Format = New Materials

Put date on page?	YES
Number Pages?	YES
Spaces between records =	1
Print lines per page =	46
Total lines per page =	51
Pause between pages?	NO

Next comes the data format and here again is what we have chosen (Table C):

TABLE C

DATA FORMAT = NEW MATERIALS
==

REPORT WIDTH = 79

COMMENT LINES:

1234567890123456789012345678901234567890123456789012345678901234567890123456789

THE FOLLOWING BOOKS ARE ON ORDER OR HAVE RECENTLY BEEN RECEIVED.
PLEASE CHECK THE STATUS COLUMN TO DETERMINE WHETHER ON ORDER OR RECEIVED.
* * * * *
A STAFF MEMBER WILL BE HAPPY TO HELP YOU IF YOU CANNOT LOCATE WHAT YOU WANT.
*   MOST NEW BOOKS WILL BE IN THE NEW BOOKS SECTION EAST OF THE CARD CATALOG. *

COLUMN TITLE LINES:

1234567890123456789012345678901234567890123456789012345678901234567890123456789

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CALL NO.	AUTHOR'S LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	ISBN
TITLE	TITLE CONTINUED	DATE ORDERED	STATUS

==

(Table C continued)

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L!                          ! F  !T  !W  !C!H!D   P!T
I !                         ! I  !A  !I  !O!..!E   L!O
N!        FIELD NAME        ! E  !B  !D  !D!S!C   A!T
E!                          ! L  !   !T  !E!U!I   C!A
 !                          ! D  !   !H  !S!B!M   E!L
#!                          ! #  !   !   ! !T!L   S!S
=======================================================
1    CALL  #                22   0   12 N   O   O   N
1    LAST NAME               2   1   20 N   O   O   N
1    FIRST NAME              3   3   15 N   O   O   N
1    ISBN                    1   4   15 N   O   O   N

2    TITLE                   4   O   30 N   O   O   N
2    TITLE CONT'D.           5   1   20 N   O   O   N
2    DATE ORDERED           12   4   12 N   O   O   N
2    STATUS:                14   2   10 N   O   O   N
```

Now things start to get exciting! You may sort by any method you choose. We do two for this bibliography. The first is author order (Table D):

TABLE D

SORT FORMAT = AUTHOR ORDER

SORT #	FIELD NAME
1	LAST NAME
2	FIRST NAME
3	TITLE

Which produces a product like this:

THE FOLLOWING BOOKS ARE ON ORDER OR HAVE RECENTLY BEEN RECEIVED.
PLEASE CHECK THE STATUS COLUMN TO DETERMINE WHETHER ON ORDER OR RECEIVED.
                                * * * *
A STAFF MEMBER WILL BE HAPPY TO HELP YOU IF YOU CANNOT LOCATE WHAT YOU WANT.
*   MOST NEW BOOKS WILL BE IN THE NEW BOOKS SECTION EAST OF THE CARD CATALOG. *

===

CALL NO.	AUTHOR'S LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	ISBN	
TITLE		TITLE CONTINUED	DATE ORDERED	STATUS

===

	COEL	MARAGARET	0-8061-1602-1	
CHIEF LEFT HAND			09-25-81	ON ORDER
	COHEN	JAMES	0-87223-685-4	
NIGHT CHASERS			10-23-81	ON ORDER
641.568 COL COLCHIE		ELIZABETH S.	LC81-15211	
READY WHEN YOU ARE:MADE-AHEAD	MEALS FOR ENTERTAINI		09-02-82	RECEIVED

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After doing my first juvenile order, I would suggest that you also include title continued or ISBN as a fourth element. Why? Because if you have more than one title by the same author, and each title starts out the same, the poor little computer will throw up its arms, cover its eyes, and ignore any entries after the first one it finds.

The next sort format we use is title (Table E):

TABLE E

SORT FORMAT = TITLE ORDER

SORT #   FIELD NAME

===

1   TITLE
2   TITLE CONT'D.
3   LAST NAME

You guessed it! This produces a lovely bibliography alphabetically arranged by title. Warning. "A's", "An's", and "The's" are not ignored any more by computer than by the average Joe Jones library patron off the street. Also, numbers will be listed at the beginning of the alphabet as follows:

1 Is My Lucky Number
2 for Tea
ALPHABET SOUP

If you want numbers alphabetized, spell them out.

You can use this same function to print out lists of books by any field in your form and you can get running totals. You can also run lists on the monitor rather than printing them out on paper. Example: How much is the list price of books ordered from March 1st to the present? This can be found by telling the program you wish to do function No. 1 Display/edit/delete records. This will produce a screen titled Find Acquisitions. We space down to the field titled Price and enter Control/T (for total). Next, we space down to the field titled Date and enter 02-29-83 and Control/F (for find). The computer immediately goes to work and produces a screen which lists the following:

> Date for   Price
> Count=   (number of items found)
> Sum=   (total of prices listed)
> Ave.=   (average price of prices listed)
> Std. Dev.=   (standard deviation of prices listed)

Other possible questions you might want to answer would be: How much did juvenile fiction orders total? How many books were ordered? What was the average price?

We began by putting juvenile and adult orders on the same form. I have recently created a separate juvenile file and will be deleting the juvenile fields from the adult file. This will speed searches and allow us to get more adult titles on fewer disks (we currently have about 1,200 adult titles on two disks).

Our book orders are placed with Baker & Taylor through the Indiana Cooperative Library Services AuthoritY (INCOLSA) Processing Authority. We have been able to tailor our program to type our five-part order slips for us. In order to do so, we tell the program to perform function No. 5 Set up or print report. We then select our page format as follows   (Table G):

TABLE G

PAGE FORMAT = ORDER SLIPS

=======================================

PUT DATE ON PAGE?   NO
NUMBER PAGES?   NO
SPACES BETWEEN RECORDS =   7
PRINT LINES PER PAGE =   56
TOTAL LINES PER PAGE =   56
PAUSE BETWEEN PAGES?   NO

Next comes the data format   (Table H):
TABLE H

DATA FORMAT = ORDER SLIPS

==
REPORT WIDTH = 45

L!		! F	!T	!W	!C!H!D	P!T
I !		! I	!A	!I	!O!. !E	L!O
N!	FIELD NAME	! E	!B	!D	!D!S!C	A!T
E!		! L	!	!T	!E!U!I	C!A
!		! D	!	!H	!S!B!M	E!L
#!		! #	!	!	! !T!L	S!S

==

1	LIB. CODE:	24	0	6	N 0	0	N
1	TITLE	4	4	30	N 0	0	N
2	TITLE CONT'D.	5	13	20	N 0	0	N
3	LAST NAME	2	10	20	N 0	0	N
3	FIRST NAME	3	1	14	N 0	0	
4	ORD. #	13	0	6	N 0	0	N
5	PUBLISHER	6	17	12	N 0	0	N
6	DATE ORDERED	12	0	8	N 0	0	N
6	YR.	7	20	4	N 0	0	N
6	PRICE	9	7	6	N 0	2	N
7	ISBN	1	13	15	N 0	0	N
8	(BLANK LINE)						
9	# COPIES	10	3	2	N 0	0	N

Our sort format is next   (Table I):

TABLE I

Sort Format =	Order Slip
Sort Number	Field Name
1	Title
2	Title Continued
3	Last Name

And then, for a select format, we enter the order number for the order we are ready to print (perhaps 83-B or J83-D). A finished order slip will look like this and they will all be printed in title order as requested by INCOLSA:

LIBRARY CODE	TITLE
ICPN	ACID WATER: A PLAGUE UPON THE WATERS

LIB. ORDER NO. 82-L

AUTHOR: OSTMANN   ROBERT JR.

DATE ORDERED 09-31-82

PUBLISHER DILLON PRESS   VOLS.

EDITION   YEAR 1982   LIST PRICE 18.00

DATE RECEIVED

ISBN 0-875 18-224-0

NO. OF COPIES 1

REMARKS

FOR CENTER USE ONLY

COST

INCOLSA PROCESSING CENTER
Book Order Form

As books are actually received from the jobber or the Processing Center, we again turn to DB MASTER. This time, we go to function No. 1 Display/edit/delete records and find the records for the books just received by giving the computer the ISBN. When the record is found, we push the escape key to edit the record. We then change any pertinent fields including the addition of the call number, changing status from on order to received, and change the date from the date ordered to the date received. This way, the next time we run a holding list, everything will be current.

We are still gaining knowledge of what this program will do for us and we still have training to do with staff members to get the best benefit from the program. Using DB MASTER has taken some of the drudgery out of ordering books and certainly makes information available more readily. I think it has even cut down on unwanted duplicates!

This explanation has necessarily left out a lot of information, but we would be pleased, within reason, to assist anyone wanting more information about how we are using DB MASTER.