



# NEWSLETTER

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## The Migration To Microsoft Windows, Was It Worth The Trip?

By Don Frey

In 1995, Donald R Frey & Company faced the reality of the market and made the commitment to migrate its software from DOS and UNIX to a MS (Microsoft) Windows 95 GUI (Graphical User Interface). Requests for our applications running on UNIX and DOS systems were declining, while the demand for Windows and NT were on the rise. This commitment was a major decision for the company. It signaled the departure from our primary operating environment for the last twelve years. It also committed us to adapting the Microsoft graphical *standard* found in Windows. It was both a technical and cultural shock.

Today, in year 2000, it seems appropriate to look at the consequences of that decision and what impact it has had on our company and customers.

Before embarking on the migration, we carefully read Microsoft's books on Windows design guidelines and standards. As it turned out, this was a very important step for us because it caused us to produce *true* Windows applications from the beginning.

In 1996, we released the CUBIC utility billing system. It offered great improvements, but there were *rough spots*. *True* Windows applications require a programming style different from that used for DOS and UNIX applications. It is *event driven* programming. Users can freely move around multiple screens in the program. This requires very extensive checking to assure all required information is properly entered and edited. This is why it takes so long for new Windows applications to stabilize. We released our last major application in 1999. The migration is now complete and running smoothly. What are the benefits?

Consistency is a **big benefit**, if the developer uses MS design guidelines. DOS, UNIX and other character applications had no design standards to follow. Every developer created their rules and styles. True Windows applications behave in a very predictable fashion. This makes them more *user friendly*. The F1 key always provides *Help*. *Help* is supplied in a standard format. The *tab* key moves you from field to field. The keyboard and mouse can be used interchangeably. Menu selections work in a similar manner. If you use products like EXCEL and WORD, you have an excellent basis for understanding how Frey applications behave. Today, most new computers come with these applications. Young users find UNIX and DOS to be *foreign*.

The comment I hear most often from current and prospective clients is the software is much easier to use than the DOS and UNIX programs. You don't have to get out of one program and into another to *get things done*. If you are entering an invoice and need to enter a new vendor, you just *do it*. There is no need to exit Invoice Entry, and start Vendor Maintenance. If you don't know a code, you *touch* a button and a search command is at your fingertips.

A negative comment is that Windows applications use more computer power than UNIX and DOS. That is true because they are graphical and more intelligent programs. Computer power is a non-issue today because the cost of hardware has dropped so dramatically.

Another argument is that *data entry is not as fast in Windows as in UNIX and DOS*. This is true, if you measure productivity by counting keystrokes. However, it is much easier to change functions in Windows, nullifying much of the keystroke advantage. Other productivity tools, more

plentiful with Windows applications, are eliminating much of the keyboarding argument. In utility billing, meter reading entry is eliminated by downloading readings from hand held devices. Payments are scanned rather than keyed. Operators today are managing information rather than just entering it.

Some critics contend that Windows LANs (local area networks) are slower than UNIX and DOS. I agree with that to a limited extent. Data entry and inquiries run at about the same speed on all systems. If you are *data mining*, such as preparing reports, LANs may run slower because of network traffic. *Tools* are now available that allow you to run these programs on the server, eliminating network traffic. This is called *thin client* processing. *Thin clients* eliminate this performance argument.

Many organizations are still running DOS, UNIX and other non-graphical systems like Pick. The main argument for not changing is *everyone is used to it, it works*. Maybe, the real reason is *fear of change*!

Some vendors have produced programs that run in a window but are actually character-based programs. They do not begin to meet Microsoft Windows standards. I call these products *Fake GUIs*. Stay away from them!

To respond to the question, "*The Migration to Microsoft Windows, Was It Worth The Trip?*" the answer is a resounding **yes!** Things are easier and more pleasant to use, once you have learned the Windows style of operation. Is it perfect? No, there is always room for improvement. However, we are a lot better off than we were in the character based DOS and UNIX era, where there were no interface standards. ☐

## New BUCS Update Released



BUCS 8.3 began shipping in September. Below are highlights of the latest improvements.

**Multiple Account Number Ranges By Password:** Allows *only* the users assigned to the *Ranges* to access those accounts.

**Improved System Management:** A check for active users will display to show who is using the system. Now, when a locked record message appears, the user will see a list of active users allowing them to locate the individual causing the lock.

**Proportional Space Printing:** Report programs have been enhanced to use proportional space fonts. In conjunction with this ability, the system allows for mixed case text. This improvement will greatly enhance the appearance of published reports.

**Financial Reports For Prior Periods:** You can now prepare financial statements for prior periods without loading backup files. These will include income, revenue, expense, balance sheet, fund and other important financial reports. You have the ability to control the length of time you wish to retain your prior period reporting information. Users will have an option to implement this feature.

**Invoice Processing:** Five major improvements have been made to improve processing efficiency, speed, ease-of-use and aesthetics.

**Cash Receipts:** A new *detailed description* has been added, as an option, to cash receipts. This expanded description will function in a manner similar to the one available in Accounts Payable.

**Improvements "Smooth Sailing":** Over twenty-five additional improvements have been added to the release to make BUCS smoother, faster and more enjoyable to use. ☐



## CPA Software News Awards BUCS Top Five Star Rating

The CPA Software News reviewed fourteen fund accounting systems in their October, 2000 issue. Frey & Company's BUCS fund accounting software was awarded a top rating of five stars! In reviewing the product the *News* commented:

*"An attractive and solid package that was built from the ground up as a true fund accounting solution."*

*"A first-class system which should be considered for any non-profit organization. It is really difficult to point out any area where this program is deficient."*

This is the second year in a row that BUCS has achieved a major ranking by an industry review. In 1999, The Nonprofit Financial Center reviewed twenty fund accounting systems. The Nonprofit Financial Center provides resources for nonprofit and religious organizations. Frey & Company's BUCS fund accounting software was rated in the top ten-percent! We feel these rankings are not only a tribute to our staff, but also to the valuable insight our clients have provided us over the years. ☐



## New CUBIC Release 8.4 in Beta Testing

Beta testing on the next major release of CUBIC began a few weeks ago. It is *rich* with new features and improvements.

**Improved System Management:** A check for active users will display to show who is using the system. Now, when a locked record message appears, the user will see a list of active users allowing them to locate the individual causing the lock.

**Customer Maintenance:** Five major improvements have been added to this function including history *drill-down*, better navigation, more searches and expanded editing features.

**Installment Module:** A brand new module designed to process *time payment* plans. It can be used for accounts in arrears and installment purchases.

**Batch Cash Receipts:** A new feature in the Productivity module. Entries can be made in *batch mode*, edited, then posted.

**Quick Pay:** A new capability in the Productivity module. This feature allows one to scan full payments using an omnidirectional scanner. Up to 1,500 receipts can be processed per hour.

**Over Estimating:** New in billing. CUBIC intelligently handles over estimates by analyzing the readings and number of estimates made.

**Payment reversals:** A new option to reverse erroneous payments. It allows one to easily *back out* duplicated payments and keying errors.

Over fifteen additional improvements have been added to the next release to make CUBIC smoother, faster and more enjoyable to use. ☐



## 2000 User Conference Smooth Sailing

The 2000 User's Conference was held August 13 – 15, at the Embassy Suites Hotel, Covington, Kentucky.

This year's theme was *Smooth Sailing*. Now that we have transitioned into the millennium and into Microsoft's Windows, we are shifting our emphasis from just feature-emphasized software to a greater blend of features and user oriented improvements. We are *migrating From Technology to Human Based Software*.

*Open Discussions* were held on how to make the software work better for you, via *ease-of-use* and *logical* extensions. A number of suggestions, offered at the conference, will appear in forthcoming releases of Frey software.

A briefing was provided on GASB Statement 34 and its impact on governmental operations. The full impact of this will begin to affect our clients in the next few years.

Don Frey spoke about the impact that the Internet will be having on the software in the next few years. Soon, we will be using the Internet for connectivity with client/server systems, via *thin client* models.

He also spoke about new pricing schemes being developed to better reflect the state of current technology. These will be forthcoming in 2000 and 2001.

The evening event for 2000 was held on the Ohio River with a relaxing, fun filled, dinner cruise aboard the riverboat Mark Twain. Mark your calendar and start making plans for the Year 2001 User Conference, It will be held at the new Marriott in Covington, Kentucky, August 12 - 14, 2001. For more information on the Marriott's facilities, visit <http://marriotthotels.com/CVGD/> ☐

## Tips For Users

By Mike Emmerich

**BUCS Year End Closing** – At the Year End Close, most users are simply running the end-of-the-month reports and running the Period/Year End Reset to close the period and start the next fiscal year. Later, they discover errors in the prior year and want to make adjustments. The simple solution is to go the **File/Utilities/Prior Year/Create** *before* you reset to your new fiscal year. This will give you the ability to make prior year adjustments, for up to eleven months. In the event you don't have any prior year adjustments, you can simply delete the prior year directory before the next fiscal year end. This action provides you the opportunity to make any necessary correcting entries. Please refer to the Getting Started section "Leaving The Year End Open For Additional Processing" section of the BUCS manual.

By Dean Eldridge

**CUBIC Skipped Account(s)** - Periodically, a customer reports that while billing customers in CUBIC, a customer is skipped and wasn't billed. The most common reason for this problem is that there is already something in the Temporary Billing file that has not been updated yet. To check to see if this is the problem, go to Options/Billing/Edit List. Key in a range that specifies the account in-question. Print the report. If anything appears on this report, you need to update or delete the transaction. Check the due/adjustment date to determine when the entry was made. If a billing is just now being entered, the report should not show any entry yet.

**CUBIC Excessively High Message:** Some users have reported that every receipt entered caused a message, *Excessively High*, to display when it was not high. This could be the result of a test that is set too low in the System Control file. Go to Options/System\_Controls/Edit and click on the Cash Receipts tab. There is a Reasonability Test on this screen. It is a plus/minus percentage. If 10 % is entered, then only amounts that are above 10% of the account balance will cause the message to appear. You should enter some reasonable figure that is based on your experience with average receipts received.

By Brian Scott

**Laser Postcard Bills** – If you are purchasing a laser printer and using postcard bills, there are a few things worth mentioning. Laser postcards require a PCL6 compliant printer for the information to properly align on the bill. The HP 2100, 4000, 5000 and 8000 series have PCL6. If you purchase a different laser that has PCL6 compatibility that should work.

**BUCS 8.3 Update** – If you have not installed the update yet, make sure to check for a prior year directory. If you are going to close the prior year into the current year, you must wait to put on the 8.3 upgrade until the prior year is closed. The prior year in BUCS 8.2 will not convert to the BUCS 8.3 release. If you are plan to create a prior year, put the BUCS 8.3 update on first, so the prior and current years will be the same version. ☐

# GOVERNMENT ♦ NONPROFIT ♦ UTILITIES

## Fund Accounting, Payroll, Utility Billing

**ESTABLISHED**, in 1974 with installations throughout the US. *We understand your business and special needs!*

**EASY TO USE**, Microsoft Windows interface with on-line Help, ODBC and extensive *search* tools. *Programs that make your work easier and more enjoyable!*

**RELIABLE**, withstood the rigors of audits in dozens of states for years. *Problem free accurate programs!*

**ECONOMICAL**, unique pricing model that lets you purchase just what you need. *More value for your money!*

**PORTABLE**, designed for multi-user systems and personal computers. Frey applications run on hundreds of computers and can easily be moved from one to another. *Freedom of choice for you!*

**ADAPTABLE**, programs that can grow with your needs! Our updates keep your programs tuned to the latest in technology. *Software that is always state-of-the-art!*

**SUPPORT**, help when you need it! A **Free** 800 number for your convenience. Internet update services. *Support you can swear by, not at!*

**INTEGRATED**, applications that talk to each other. ODBC and Crystal Reports allow you to easily transfer data from Frey packages to spreadsheet, word processor and other application systems. *A team approach to your needs!*

**SPECIAL SERVICES**, custom designed modifications; full range of computer related consulting services. *Professionalism and competence on which you can rely!*

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