

[Quickly document your projects, tables, and reports with this handy Developer's Assistant.]

We've covered some pretty heavy duty products in this column over the past few months, but it's important to remember that a tool doesn't have to contain megabytes of code, design surfaces (sorry, Les), and documentation to be "cool." This month we're going to talk about a nifty utility that one of my fellow user group members has developed for a very specific purpose.

I met Kent Tushaus at the kickoff of the Milwaukee Association of FoxPro Developers, and since that first meeting, he's always had an interesting twist to solving a common problem. This month's Cool Tool, the Developer's Assistant ("DA"), started out as a stand-alone program that documented variables created in reports from the FoxPro Report Writer.

As with many tools (remember that dBase II was created to track the office football pool), it kind of grew, and now Kent has several handy utilities all packaged under one simple interface. Copy the DA files to a directory and then DO DEVASST. You'll be able to select a project, a directory of databases, or a report, and run a quick report on the components to the screen, printer, or a file.

The purpose of this utility is to provide quick access to a number of lists that a programmer commonly needs during development. Sure, you can run FoxDoc - after spending an hour wading through the options and deciding which flags to set and which reports to run. Sometimes, however, you just need a quick list of files or a description of all the tags for a set of tables. Developer's Assistant does just that.

Project Documentation

Looking for a quick tool to list all the components of a project? Selecting Project from the Info popup and then selecting the project of interest will result in a report that lists all screens, programs, reports, menus, databases, queries, labels, files and libraries, in alphabetical order.

Table Documentation

A quick list of all databases, their indexes, the names and index expressions is created when you select DBF/CDX from the Info popup.

Report Documentation

The gem of this utility is the documentation it produces for reports. DA will list all fields and variables in a report, and include the settings for each: name, expression, initial value, aggregation function and the reset point.

Developer's Assistant comes packaged with sample data so you can run it immediately. Select the DEVASST project, any directory that contains tables, or the SAMPLE.FRX to test the various components.

Kent is already working on enhancements for version 2.0, including additional information on tags (the FOR clause, Descending/Ascending flag, and the Unique specification) and report objects (Format, Style, Type, Suppress, Float, Stretch). Send him your comments and suggestions for enhancements (contact information available in DA's Help text). I suspect he may end up getting more than he bargained for with this request.

Developer's Assistant is freeware and can be found on this month's Companion Disk and in Library 10 of CompuServe's FoxForum.