

# Key OPs

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## What do your maintenance dollars really buy?

As a businessperson, you always have your eye on the bottom line — especially now, as you're planning for your next fiscal year. At DDMS, we understand about keeping an eye on the bottom line. It's the sole reason we've never raised our maintenance fees.

Your monthly itemized maintenance invoice tells you how much to make the check for, but doesn't really tell you what you're buying. Your maintenance dollars buy *more* than just Technical Support. To recognize the value of maintenance, let's look at what your dollars buy.

### Software & I/O Maintenance

In addition to Technical Support, your software and I/O maintenance dollars pay for the research and development behind software and operating system enhancements. The documentation you receive tells you the best way to utilize features, and to maximize their benefits. Our monthly publications give you up-to-the-minute news about your DDMS system.

### Help Desk Software Support

If you've ever called 1-800-366-4778 with a problem or a question, you've seen your maintenance dollars at work. DDMS Technical Support is available from 7 am to 8:30 pm (cst) Monday through Friday to help you solve problems. Depending on your operating system, between 20 and 35 percent of your total maintenance dollars go to Software Support.

Even though only a few cents of every maintenance dollar goes to Technical Support, we're focusing on improving it because it's what you've prioritized in your feedback. To find out about the changes we're making, see It's All About Feedback on page 2.

### Research & Development

With every new software version release, we're adding value to our product. Each general software release gives you new and enhanced modules, designed specifically to automate processes.

As our programmers design and write each new DDMS software version, our goal is always automation — how can we make your job easier? We're always looking at the tasks you do on a regular basis to find ways your DDMS computer system can do more of them for you. The reasoning behind this is simple. Some of your biggest expenditures every year are for salaries and benefits. We want you to be able to expand your business without expanding your payroll.

For example, consider what you pay in salaries and benefits. When you implement an application like Automated Short-Buy module, you can eliminate a portion of your payroll expenditure. While you are paying a monthly maintenance fee, it is certainly much less than the cost of a single salary.

In addition to Automated Short-Buy, there are other modules available in current or previously released software that can save time and money. Vendor Credit Returns, Picking Manifest, Shipping Manifest and the Accounts Payable [DO] modules, just

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Crystal Dennstedt

From the Operations Manager's Desk

## It's all about feedback

For more than a year in this column, I've been highlighting the changes we're making based on your comments.

The most recent ones we've talked about include:

- Immediate Manager process implementation
- Shipping process improvement
- EComm support group consolidation

Currently, we're working to address the following:

- Accessibility
- Quality and Consistency of Technical Answers
- Improved Response Time

### Accessibility

Our industry realized the importance of the role delivery drivers play in the customers' perception of their business. In that same way, we've come to recognize that the way we handle your calls influences your perception of *your value* to us. To insure that your calls are handled effectively and efficiently, we've hired a full-time operator who is familiar with our customers and the appropriate DDMS personnel to address their issues.

When you call our toll-free Administration or Sales number, you'll be greeted by a menu that will give you the option to reach the operator. You'll also have the operator option from any voice mailbox. This is especially helpful if you don't know who you need to talk to, or don't need to wait in que for Quick Response. Use this option to save time when you need to log a call for the EComm support group or for the Custom Programming department. If you know your tracking number, you can reopen a call this way, as well as check the status of a shipment. You can also request information to be faxed or emailed to you. Yet another option is sending your requests to us via email at [support@ddms.com](mailto:support@ddms.com), [sales@ddms.com](mailto:sales@ddms.com) or at [training@ddms.com](mailto:training@ddms.com). This allows you to contact us at your convenience.

### Quality and Consistency of Technical Answers

As part of our continuing quest for process improvement, we're working to increase our Support Techs' general knowledge base and the consistency of answers you receive. The Software and Hardware Support managers are charged with daily coaching and the review of all unresolved problems. We've changed our physical layout to foster our mentoring program. Our entry-level and Level I techs are assigned to a more experienced Level II tech on a 3:1 basis.

We've improved the tools available to them to assist you. Desktop computers give them instant access to a PGDOS, NT and Unix test systems, on-line documentation, program update reports, and how-to (fax files) and if-then (process cards) troubleshooting resources. If a Level I tech has exhausted his resources and still failed to solve the problem, a Level II tech takes over. When it comes to getting you answers and solving your system problems, *a guess isn't good enough.*

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When it comes to getting you answers and solving your system problems, *a guess isn't good enough.*



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### DDMS Phone Directory

Administration: 800/366-3367 General Fax: 817/431-8303  
 Sales: 800/366-3367 Sales Fax: 817/431-0955  
 Support: 800/366-4778 Suppt. Fax: 817/431-0201 or 431-0956

Tech Tips from the Help Desk

# It's a wrap

In today's competitive marketplace, you need every advantage you can get. Many wholesalers will package and label each customer's order for you, so you don't have to. This feature is called Wrap-N-Label or Wrap-N-Pack.

Your system can transmit P/Os that your wholesaler will prepackage for you — all you have to do is set your parameters for it and notify your wholesaler.

You need to set Wrap-N-Pack parameters separately for each wholesaler. For most wholesalers, go to the (L6) subscreen that contains their communication parameters, find the Wrap-N-Pack parameter, and set it to Y. (To use Wrap-N-Pack with O'Henry, for example, go to the (L6EA) screen and set the WRAP-N-PACK field to Y.)

For United and S.P. Richards, however, it's a little more complex, because there are related features to consider. We'll cover each of these separately.

*Note:* If you do not have Version 3 software yet, you won't have some of the fields shown.

## Setting Up Wrap-N-Label with United

To use United's Wrap-N-Label feature, go to the (L6F) United Communications screen, which is

shown below. Tab to each of the following parameters, and set them using the instructions below.

### W-N-L

United's Wrap-N-Label feature divides your P/Os, creating a separate P/O for each customer order. To create P/O numbers for each order, the system adds sequence numbers (ØØ1, ØØ2, and so forth) to the original P/O number. The W-N-L field lets you enable Wrap-N-Label, and indicate how you want to handle the labeling. Specify one of the following codes:

- Y (recommended) Use the SHIPPING INST and CONSUMER TEXT parameters to specify label options. We'll describe these parameters later.
- Z Prints labels that include: customer invoice number, customer P/O number, shipping address, and route.
- U Prints labels like those for the Z option, but omits the shipping address.
- H Prints labels like those for the Z option, but prints only 29 characters per line instead of 40. Use this option when transmitting orders to an HP house.

**Tech Tips from the Help Desk** presents answers to the questions dealers ask most. It has two formats: *If...Then* helps you find solutions: *If* this happens, *Then* you do that. *How Do I...* explains how to perform a procedure. Please save these columns in a binder for future reference.

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```

16:58:47          United Communications Screen          09/29/98
-----
Communication Parameters | United Parameters [ 1 ]
-----|-----
Hayes Only ?           Capture Log ? (Y/N) | Acct Id [      ] Pass [      ]
Prefix ?               Reliable ?         | Account #1 [    ] [    ]
Uni-Link #             Baud :           | Account #2 [    ] [    ]
Score #               Baud :           | Account #3 [    ] [    ]
Elec. Inv #           Time Out #       | Account #4 [    ] [    ]
Block Size #          Transmission #   | Account #5 [    ] [    ]
Phone Line #          Custom String [  ] | E. Inv [      ] Pass [      ]
Order Type ?          File Type ?     | Shipping Inst. / / / / /
ADOT ?                W-N-L ?        Consolidated W-N-L ? | Consumer Text , , , , ,
Multiple Drop Ships ? Zipcode Routing ? | Barcode ?
Allow Backorders ?   Ignore NDS ?   | ASI Label Format ?
Exc. Mfg [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] | Label Format [      ]
Consolidate Locations on Orders ? | Route : (R/S/Z) Tag [    ]
Item Description on Acknowledgment ? | Ref# : (C/I/P) Tag [    ]
Break Page Between Each Order ? | P/O# : (C/P) Tag [    ]
Pre-Receive Purchase Orders ? | Terminal Type # Control ?
Printer [ ]          Region ID ?
    
```

Fields that affect United's Wrap-N-Label feature

Continued from page 3

## It's a wrap

Complete information on setting up wholesaler communications can be found in "Book V: Purchasing and Communications."

The information you specify in the Shipping Inst, Consumer Text, Route/Tag, Ref#/Tag, and P/O#/Tag fields also prints on other United documents.

### Consolidated W-N-L

If you set this parameter to Y, all Wrap-N-Label orders will be combined on a single United invoice, instead of being invoiced separately. Consolidating these invoices can save time when posting to accounts payable—you have only one United invoice to post, instead of one per customer.

### Break Page Between Each Order

Indicate how you'll handle Wrap-N-Label acknowledgments with this parameter:

- Y Print one order per page on the acknowledgment, and leave these orders in the acknowledgment file.
- N (recommended) Print one order per page on the acknowledgment, and delete the acknowledgment file after it prints.
- X Print several orders per page on the acknowledgment, and leave those orders in the acknowledgment file.
- Z (recommended) Print several orders per page on the acknowledgment, and delete the acknowledgment file after it prints.

### Shipping Inst

Indicate what shipping instructions the label will contain here. This field applies only when you set the W-N-L parameter to Y. This portion of the label may contain up to six lines. Use codes to indicate what prints. Specify these codes in the order you want them to print.

- I Invoice number    C Customer P/O number
- R Route            W WHOCALLED special
- E END special     L Long P/O number
- F P/O number      N Customer name
- S SORT ORDER field from the (AQ) screen.

You can leave a blank line on the label by leaving a blank between codes. Specify N, ,R, for example, and you put a blank line between the customer's name and the route.

*Note:* You cannot leave the first place blank; if you do, the system ignores this parameter.

### Consumer Text

Here you indicate what customer instructions the label will contain. Again, this field applies only

when you set the W-N-L parameter to Y. You can include up to six lines of customer instructions. Like the SHIPPING INST field, enter codes in the order you want information to print, and leave blank spaces to print a blank line. The codes you can use for this field are the same as those available for the SHIPPING INST parameter.

### Barcode

Use this field to print barcodes on United's labels.

If you do not want to print barcodes on the labels, leave this field blank. To print barcodes, specify one of the following codes:

- P P/O number
- I Invoice number
- C Customer's P/O number.

### Label Format

Specify the label format you want to use in this field. Six formats are available: SHIPLBØ1–SHIPLBØ6. DDMS recommends SHIPLBØ6.

### Route/Tag

These fields let you print routing information on your labels. In the ROUTE field, indicate what kind of routing information you want to print by specifying the appropriate code:

- R Print the customer's route.
- S Print the customer's route and sort order (from the SORT ORDER field in the (AQ) screen).
- Z Print the zip code from the customer's shipping address.

In the TAG field, you can enter a description, which prints in front of the routing information. If you're printing zip codes, for example, you could type ZIP in the TAG field.

### Ref#/Tag

These fields let you print a reference number on your labels. Specify a code in the REF# to indicate what you'll use as a reference number:

- I Use the customer's pick ticket or invoice number
- P Use the vendor's P/O number from the (F) screen
- C Use the customer's P/O number.

The TAG field lets you print a description for the reference number.

**P/O#/Tag**

These fields let you indicate which kind of P/O number to print on your labels. (Remember that you're choosing the P/O number for the customer's convenience, since it's for Wrap-N-Label orders.) Use one of the following codes:

- C Customer's P/O number
- P Vendor's P/O number from the (F) screen.

The TAG field lets you print a description before the P/O number.

When you complete the last field you need to change, save your changes by pressing RETURN until the (L6) Vendor and Wholesaler Communications menu appears.

**Setting Up Wrap-N-Pack with S.P. Richards**

To use S.P. Richard's Wrap-N-Pack feature, you set parameters in the (L6C) Sparco Ez-Order/Interactive Parameters screen, which is shown below.

Tab to each of the following parameters, and set them using the instructions below.

**Route/Barcode**

In these fields, indicate whether you want routes to print on the labels, and whether these routes will print as characters or as barcodes.

To include routes on your Wrap-N-Pack labels, specify Y in the ROUTE field.

If you specify Y in the ROUTE field, indicate how routes will print in the corresponding BARCODE field:

- Y Print routes as barcodes
- N (default) Print routes using letters and numbers.

**Ref#/Barcode**

In these fields, indicate whether you want to print a reference number on the labels. Like the route, you can also choose to print reference numbers as characters or as barcodes. To include a reference number, indicate what you want to use as a reference by specifying one of these codes:

- I Print the customer's invoice number as a reference.
- P Print the Vendor's P/O number from the (F) screen as a reference.
- C Print the customer's P/O number as a reference.

Use the corresponding BARCODE field as you did for the route: type Y to print the reference number as a barcode, or type N to print it using letters and numbers.

**PO#/Barcode**

Indicate whether to print P/O numbers on the labels here. If you want to print P/O numbers, enter one of the following codes:

- C Print the customer's P/O number on the label.
- P Print the Vendor's P/O number from the (F) screen on the label.

**Remember:** After you change a parameter in any of the (L6) subscreens, press RETURN until the system redisplayes the (L6) Vendor and Wholesaler Communications menu. If you don't, your change will not be saved.

Information you specify in the Route/Barcode, Ref#/Barcode, and P/O#/Barcode fields will also print on other S.P. Richards documents.

Continued on page 6

```

16:59:57          Sparco Ez-Order / Interactive Parameters          09/29/98
-----
Modem Parameters          |          SPARCO Parameters [ 1 ]
-----
Hayes Only ? (Y/N)      Capture Log ? (Y/N) | Ship Code      ? Backorders ?
Prefix      ?          Reliable ?          | SPARCO Subs   ? Attn      ?
Sp/Link    #          Baud      :          | Like Item Subs ? Print Cost ?
Sp/Order   #          Terminal ?          | Convert Units ? End Line  ?
Block Size #          File Type ?          | Print Shorts  ?
Phone Line #          | Ship Partial  ?
Custom String [          ] | Print One Order Per Invoice ?
-----
Cust Nbr   Cust Id   Printer | Print List on Pick ?
1 [        ] [        ] [    ] | Multiple Drop Ship ?
2 [        ] [        ] [    ] | Zipcode Routing  ?
3 [        ] [        ] [    ] | Ignore NDS       ?
4 [        ] [        ] [    ] |
-----
Route : (Y/N)          Barcode : (Y/N) | Wrap-N-Pack ?   Pre-Receive ?
Ref#  : (I/P/C)       Barcode : (Y/N) | Primary Loc [   ] Shorts ?
P/O#  : (C/P)         Barcode : (Y/N) | Short Locations
Compressed Acknowledgement Format : (Y/N) | [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
-----
    
```

The fields that affect Wrap-N-Pack in the (L6C) screen

Continued from page 5

### It's a wrap

Use the corresponding BARCODE field as you did for route and reference number: type Y to print the P/O number as a barcode, or type N to print it using letters and numbers.

### Compressed Acknowledgement Format

Indicate whether you want Sparco's acknowledgments to print in compressed format here.

When acknowledgments print, the system includes several lines of header information for each invoice. If you use compressed format, the system prints this header information only once, greatly reducing the number of pages. Enter the appropriate response:

- Y (recommended) Print the acknowledgments in compressed format.
- N (default) Print the acknowledgments in standard format.

### Attn

Indicate what you want to print on the label's attention line here.

You can print the contact name from the (A) screen or the name from the WHOCALLED special in order entry. (You can also print the END special from order entry; see the End Line heading below.)

Enter the appropriate response:

- Y Print the WHOCALLED special from order entry, if one exists. If there is no WHOCALLED special for an order, print the contact name from the CONTACT field in the Shipping Address Record of the (A) screen.

W Print the WHOCALLED special from order entry, if one exists. If there is no WHOCALLED special for an order, leave the attention line blank.

N (default) Print the contact name from the CONTACT field in the Shipping Address Record of the (A) screen.

### End Line

This field gives you the option of printing an order's END spe-

cial on the label's attention line. This field overrides the ATTN parameter. Enter the appropriate response:

- Y Print the order's END special on the label's attention line.
- N (default) Do not print the END special on the label's attention line.



### Wrap-N-Pack

This field indicates whether you want to use the Wrap-N-Pack feature. To use Wrap-N-Pack, type Y.

### Shorts


Indicate whether you want to use the auto shorts feature here. Auto shorts will automatically fill your order from another branch when the main branch can't fill it. Enter the appropriate response:

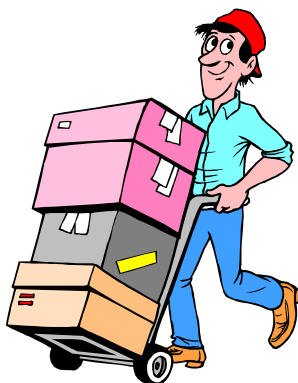
- Y Use auto shorts. If a Wrap-N-Pack order cannot be filled at the main branch, it's filled at another branch, but is no longer treated as a Wrap-N-Pack order.
- X Use auto shorts. If a Wrap-N-Pack order cannot be filled at the main branch, it's filled at another branch, and is still treated as a Wrap-N-Pack order.
- N (default) Do not use auto shorts.

### Short Locations

If you set the SHORTS field to X or Y, specify the additional Sparco locations you want orders filled from in these fields. Specify the locations in your order of preference.

You use codes to specify branch locations. For a list of these codes, see the description of the Sparco Locations Record in "Chapter 18: Setting Sparco Parameters" in *Book V: Purchasing and Communications*.

After completing the last field you're changing, save your changes by pressing RETURN until the system redisplay the (L6) Vendor and Wholesaler Communications menu. 



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## What do your maintenance dollars really buy?

to name a few, all of which automate everyday processes and, therefore, save you money.

As a safeguard, we've put an authorization process in place for some modules. We've found this to be the best way to insure that implementing a module won't negatively impact your business. In addition, authorization insures that you won't be kept waiting while our Support Techs train a new user.

## Documentation

With our Version 3 software release, we debuted a new documentation style. It's more concise and organized to help you readily lay your hands on the information you need. All of the new features of Version 3 are detailed in a single book, *1998 General Release Software Documentation*. Each chapter deals with a different feature, such as the new Multiple Units of Measure. The chapters are divided into four basic parts.

- Concepts
- Field Definitions
- Setup and Parameters
- Using the Feature

For Version 4, Using the Feature quick reference outlines will be available electronically in the Tech Tips format. You can select the topics most important to you and build your own binder.

To make training new employees easier, we will be releasing a set of training videos and companion workbooks for the core system and optional modules. A training package is currently available for Furniture. (For more information, see Furniture Training Package Available at right.) A similar training package for the Serialized module will be completed by the new year.

## Publications

The issues of *KeyOps* and *Distributed Data* that you receive bimonthly are full of up-to-date information you need. For example, the November/December issue of *KeyOps* contains period-ending procedures for day-, week-, month- and year-end for PGDOS, UNIX and Windows NT. Tech Tips from

the Help Desk gives you step-by-step instructions on the topics you call Support about most often. *Distributed Data* is home to Marketing 101, a recurring feature that highlights ways to use your DDMS system to make your business more competitive and profitable.

In the near future, all of these resources, as well as handouts from Users' Meetings and training classes at DDMS, will be available electronically.

## Hardware Maintenance

There are two levels of hardware maintenance: First-call hardware support and CPU/server hardware support. First-call support covers the diagnosis of CPU or server trouble. CPU/Server support covers your CPU or server's overnight replacement, installation assistance, and greatly reduces the cost of system upgrades. The cost for hardware maintenance varies, depending on your hardware configuration and operating system. Dealers who do not have CPU/Server support may pay for technical support on an individual basis.

## Optional Module Maintenance

Optional Modules are other tools available to help you run your business. They require additional support and have their own maintenance fees. However, they also create additional sales or save you time and/or money. For this reason, these modules quickly pay for themselves. By billing only the customers who use these them, DDMS can keep software maintenance prices lower for everyone.

Any of our Remote Order Entry modules is like adding a data entry clerk to your staff without the payroll expense, since your customers enter their own orders. Electronic invoicing is another option that can streamline your business and save you money.

Our Serialized and Furniture applications allow you to handle these segments of your business as efficiently as you do your office products line.

Our interface packages make communication between computers and programs easier — whether you're importing and exporting information between modules or between your DDMS system and your wholesaler's system.

What do your maintenance dollars buy? A network of support that's there for you.

## Furniture training package available

There are some special materials to help you train new employees. The furniture module training package contains three videos, two workbooks, a quick reference manual and a getting started manual. These training materials are available *free of charge* to our customers who want to use the furniture module. While the materials are free, they're only available by request. To get yours, fill out the order form on page 8 and fax it back.

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**It's all about feedback**

**Improved Response Time**

In your business, one of your daily critical times is typically in the afternoon as you prepare orders for your wholesalers. You juggle the demands of meeting your wholesaler's deadline while still giving your customers the maximum time for ordering. Due to time constraints, you focus on filling backorders, not on filling your shelves.

At DDMS, in order to improve response time, we have to focus on solving problems before addressing how-to (training) questions. With a volume of 300 calls a day — 500 during peak times — our crunch time is every day, all day. Down calls, which are critical by nature, receive top priority. We want to have you back in business as soon as possible.

Problem calls receive second priority. Their resolution is also important to you and to us.

While focusing more on prioritizing calls we realized that how-to and if-then questions sometimes masquerade as system problems, as when an incorrectly set parameter causes unexpected results.

Because these calls make up the majority of the calls we receive, we realize that we need to provide

you with more effective training tools. These tools must be ones that you can use without leaving the office or waiting in que, that are reusable and that are self-paced.

To that end, we're redesigning our documentation to compliment the videos and companion workbooks we're developing. In addition, you'll be able to select topics from documentation and build a quick reference binder of how-to and if-then questions specific to your operational flow.

Through your feedback, we learned that the quick reference format, such as our fax files for how-tos and process cards for if-then troubleshooting, were more helpful to you than our volumes of documentation. We're working to make these resources more readily available to you by giving you the operator option from the call menu and the email opportunity.

Users' meetings around the country and on-site visits are also valuable for more in-depth training.

We're working hard to increase the value of our services to you, but it takes time. Changes instituted today may not be obvious to you for months. That's why I make you aware of the changes through this column. We appreciate your help in the process and I encourage you to continue letting us know how we're doing.

**We've changed the format of our users' meetings to provide more in-depth training on a variety of popular topics. San Francisco, Nov. 13 & 14 is your next training opportunity.**



**P.O. Box 507, Keller, TX 76244**

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Learn what you need to know about Version 3 at the next DDMS Users' Meeting Nov. 13 & 14, 1998 San Francisco Airport Marriott

**Mail To:**

- Yes!** I want to attend the DDMS Users' Meeting Nov. 13 & 14 in San Francisco! Please send me more information!
- Yes!** I use the DDMS Furniture module and would like a set of videos and workbooks. For more information on the Furniture training packet, see page 7.

Return this form to:

DDMS • P.O. Box 507 • Keller, Texas 76244 • Fax (817) 431-0955 • Attention: Sales Department



DDMS • P.O. Box 507 • Keller, TX 76244 • 817-431-0668 • Sales: 800-366-3367 • Sales Fax: 817-431-0955

Dear DDMS Customer:

As you probably know, the year 2000 will be a critical one for the computer industry, and for business and organizations that depend on computer systems for their daily operations. At midnight on January 1, 2000, many older software programs and computer systems will stop working, or at least stop working correctly.

The problem, known as the Year 2000 (or Y2K) Crisis and several other names, is dates and the way they are handled by some computer systems. Many programs store calendar dates in a six-digit format, using two digits each for the month, day, and year. Under this system, December 31, 1999, would be 12/31/99 and January 1, 2000 *should* be 01/01/00. However, many programs were designed to interpret the year 00 as 1900.

You can imagine the problems this can create for date-reliant business activities like order entry, purchasing, and bookkeeping. What if every customer who was more than 30 days past due yesterday suddenly doesn't owe you a penny for almost a century — at least as far as the computer is concerned?

Your new Version 3 software includes changes that address this situation. The date-handling routines in all of the various modules, applications, and reports that make up the DDMS system have been revised.

The changes are largely invisible. For convenience, the software still uses six digit dates for screen displays. Internally, files that use dates as keys have been converted to support eight digit dates. Files where dates are stored as fields still use six digit dates. However, when anything from 00 through 79 appears in a date field, the system automatically interprets it as 2000 through 2079. Likewise, the numbers 80 through 99 will be interpreted as 1980 through 1999. Once this software is loaded, your system will be ready for the next millennium.

Sincerely,

Charles Russell  
President



Automation Systems and Services from the DDMS Family of Companies