



LOS ANGELES DELPHI USER GROUP NEWSLETTER

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January Meeting - LADUG

When: Thursday, January 1, 1998, 7:00 PM.

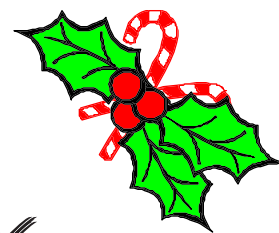
Where: Westside Pavilion, Pico Boulevard, West LA.

by Steve Colagiovanni

Since our January meeting falls on New Years day, we have decided to not have a January meeting. Our next meeting will be on Thursday, February 5, 1998.

CANCELLED

Happy Holidays



*From the Los Angeles
Delphi User Group*



EDITOR'S CORNER

The pressings of the Delphi 3.01 update CD-ROM haven't even cooled off yet and Borland has released a patch to update us to 3.02. You can read more about this on the next page. Meanwhile, Borland has also begun work on the next release of Delphi. As more information becomes available, I will pass this along to you.

We are very happy to present the first of several articles by member Emery Galambos on coding standards. Every programmer has their own style and I am certain that this article will create a lot of discussion among the group. I strongly feel that having and following a standard is far more important than the specific details of that standard. The most important part of a coding standard is to produce readable and easy to understand code. If a given set of standards accomplishes this, then it's a good set of standards.

If any of you have an alternate set of coding standards that you would like to share with the group, we will be happy to publish it in the newsletter. Also, you may want to visit the Orange County Delphi User Group's website (www.ocdelphi.org). Their Special Interest Group (SIG) page has a copy of the OCDUG recommended coding standards, which you can download.

Happy Holidays.



The Los Angeles Delphi User Group

The Los Angeles Delphi User Group is a forum for ideas and a meeting ground to bring together users of Borland Delphi for the purposes of mutual education.

For more information about the Los Angeles Delphi User Group contact any of the officers.

Los Angeles Delphi User Group Newsletter

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

LADUG Officer Elections Coming Soon

We will be electing new officers in February, 1998. We are currently accepting nominations for candidates. If you would like to run for an office, or you would like to nominate someone, please submit your nominations to Neal Koss by January 31. Nominations can be submitted by e-mail (nkoss@intl-informatics.com), fax (310-375-6685) or mail (Neal Koss, International Informatics, 3655 Lomita Blvd., Suite 215, Torrance, CA 90505-3933).

Because of other commitments, Tim Boyd and Marv Siegal have decided to vacate their posts. The current list of nominees include:

- For President - Richard Shaw, Emery Galambos
- For Vice President - Art Metz
- For Treasurer - Neal Koss, Gabriel Forner
- For Secretary - Jim Arnold
- For Membership Director - Steve Colagiovanni

The nominees will be announced at the February 5th meeting. There will be a voting ballot in the February issue of the newsletter and the winners will be announced at the March 5th Meeting.

Orange County Delphi User Group

Our sibling group, the Orange County Delphi User Group, meets the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM. For more information call Greg Stevenson, President, (714) 457-9621, CompuServe 75402,3514 or DrDelphi@AOL.COM or Michael Cummings, (714) 639-6937, CompuServe 73651,1132. OCDUG has a Web site at <http://www.ocdelphi.org>.

Meetings are held at Western Digital Corporation, 8105 Irvine Center Drive, Irvine, CA. Western Digital is a large 15 story building located between the 5 and 405 freeways near the El Toro "Y".

Consultant/Programmer Referral List

If you are a paid member of LADUG and want to be on our Consultant/Programmer referral list, e-mail Richard Shaw at: 71210.423@compuserve.com. This Consultant/Programmer list will be faxed or sent to any prospective employer who contacts our group looking for Delphi-knowledgeable people.

If you are interested in being on this list, e-mail Richard with your:

- Name
- Company (if independent contractor)
- Address
- Telephone number
- Fax number
- E-mail address (if any)
- A brief description (say 50 words) of your areas of specialization or expertise.

Share Your Discoveries With the Group!

Have you stumbled upon a really nifty way to do something in Delphi? Did your fourteen consecutive sleepless nights of programming result in an interface design or programming method that's elegant beyond belief? Did you finally solve the deep programming issue that you've been pondering for weeks? Let's face it. Most of the world won't even understand what you're talking about, let alone appreciate what you've found. But your friends in the LADUG will. That's what user groups are about.

If you can present what you're working on, a Delphi related topic, or your experiences with a 3rd party library for anywhere up to an hour, let Tim Boyd know. (See page 2 for contact info.) We'll schedule you for part of a meeting. It would help to have something running on a laptop, so we can hook you up to an LCD projector panel. It's fun for everyone and a great way to share your knowledge.

Continued on page 10

DELPHI NEWS

Delphi Informant Complete Works: 1995-1997 CD-ROM

The ultimate reference source for the serious Delphi developer has just been made available. The *Delphi Informant Complete Works: 1995-1997* CD-ROM contains the text and code to all of the articles ever to appear in Delphi Informant from 1995 through 1997. If you're doing serious Delphi development or are learning Delphi, this is a must-have reference source. For more information, visit the Delphi Informant website at: www.informant.com/delphi/dicd97.htm.

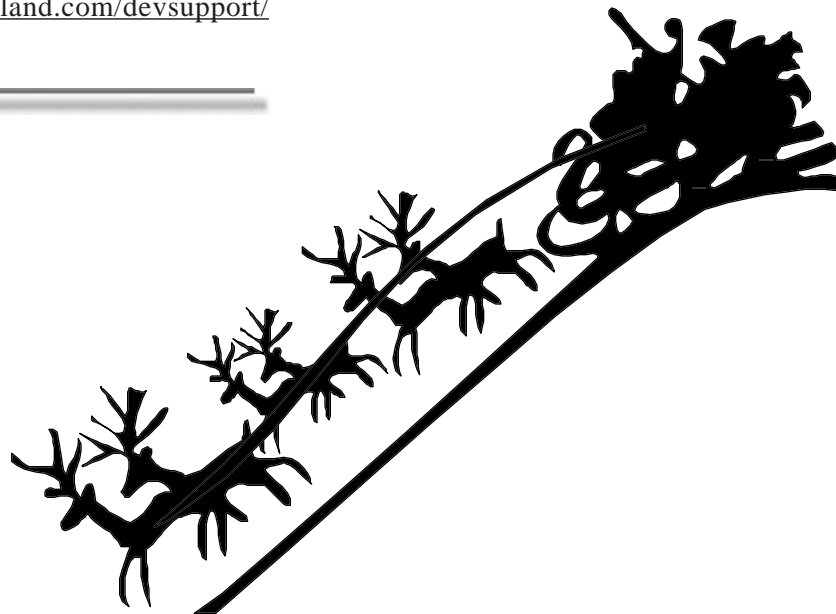
Borland Releases Delphi 3.02 Patch

Borland recently released some additional patches for Delphi 3. There is a separate patch for each of the three Delphi packages (e.g. Professional, Client/Server, etc.) These patches fix several additional problems and require the Delphi 3.01 Update. These patches will upgrade your version of Delphi to 3.02. For more information visit Borland's website at: www.borland.com/devsupport/delphi/downloads/.

CodeRush 3.01Q beta available

The new beta 3.01Q of CodeRush (formerly named Raptor) is now available at the Eagle Software website (www.eagle-software.com). CodeRush is a Delphi 3 add-on that should dramatically boost your productivity. These features include smart keyboard templates, clipboard history, named bookmarks, stack-based markers, high-speed multi-file search, comment/un-comment selected text, changed line and new line indicators, and a file manager, a "Hot Files" tracker. CodeRush is integrated with Delphi, so you still get complete access to all the Delphi 3.0 features you need, like integrated debugging, visual form editing, Code Parameters, Code Completion, and ToolTip Expression Evaluation.

You can also download the beta 3.02F of the CDK (Component Developer Kit). For more information, contact: markm@eagle-software.com.



MEETING NOTES

December Meeting Highlights

by Steven Colagiovanni

Our December featured one of our new members, Jim Arnold, who is a Delphi programmer for Media Services in West LA. Jim explained how he created an object hierarchy, the descendents of which are used to store and display the information stored in a database.

Jim used a TTreeView for a Windows Explorer style front end to access and display the data contained in a database. The various objects he created are stored in the TTreeView and are doubly linked to each other using custom lists which are descendents of TList. This way, the object stored

in each node knows about each of its child nodes and also knows about its parent.

The custom lists that Jim uses are descendents of a TList object. Each custom handles the typecasting of his objects so that he doesn't continuously have to typecast their use in the code. This provides a lot of built in security and eliminates errors from improper typecasting. Jim also explained how he uses a template method for designing these objects.

Job Opportunities

We received the following job openings and are passing them along. If you, or anyone you know, are interested in any of these positions, please contact the Client at the below mentioned address. LADUG does not screen, and takes no responsibility for position announcements, but does make them available to members of LADUG.

Burbank, CA (received 12/4/97)

Permanent opening for Programmer/Analyst:

Salary: \$64k to \$67k

Minimum 2 years experience in Delphi, Interbase, MS Access, MS SQL Server, AS 400 development and support including CL.RPG and various rapid query and application development tools. Experience in Windows NT and/or Windows 95 environments a must.

Excellent opportunity for new division of Amusement Park.

If you are interested in this opportunity please contact:

Rich Senner
rsenner@dpsla.com

Free Delphi Job Listings

If you have a job available using Delphi, contact Richard Shaw (see officer's contact info). We'll put it in the newsletter free of charge. Submissions should be e-mailed to Steve Colagiovanni at:

Steve_Cola@compuserve.com.

MEMBER'S CORNER

Do you have something to contribute to the group? Have you developed a work-around for a problem or limitation you found in Delphi? Would you like to tell others about an add-on for Delphi or a third party component package you "just can't live without"? Want to just see your name in print? Share your knowledge and experience with the group. E-mail your contributions to: Steve_Cola@compuserve.com.

Coding Standards *By Emery Galambos*

This is the first of several articles by member Emery Galambos, outlining his companies coding standards and recommendations. Coding standards are an important part of creating well written applications. By following a set of coding standards, and naming conventions for components and variables, your code is easier to read and maintain. Also, following these standards can eliminate a lot of potential bugs and errors.

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Los Angeles Delphi User Group officers, members, or the organization as a whole. If you have any comments or suggestions regarding this article, please contact Emery Galambos directly at: egalambos@software-tech.com.

Design Recommendations

This document is meant to communicate Software Technology's standards and recommendations. By no means is it meant to be dogmatic. Programming is very much a matter of style and subject to differences in personal opinion. Furthermore, like all rules, these are not meant to be hard and fast or set in concrete, and if there is a good reason to break them, do. Nonetheless, herein we will attempt to explain the preferences we have and the reasons for them. We will also assume that you are familiar, as a user, with many common Windows conventions and will make only a minimal attempt at defining them. There are numerous resources available that can describe them in further detail.

Forms & Reports

Clearly the most important part of any application, forms are the primary mechanism with which you communicate with your user. Key issues that are form related are discussed below.

Look and Feel

We believe that a Multiple Document Interface (MDI) standard is the appropriate User Interface for end users. While Microsoft has proclaimed the future to be Single Document Interface (SDI), as best exemplified by Delphi itself, they have, at the same time, continued to use MDI for such applications as Word and Excel. SDI is a very complex User Interface and can be very confusing. MDI is much simpler and less intimidating. Furthermore, inasmuch as word processors and spreadsheets are the types of tools with which an end user would be most familiar, it would be far less jarring if a custom application behaved as much as possible like these applications to the extent that it makes sense to do so.

If you wish to permit your user to have multiple instances of the same form at the same time (for example, looking at two different detail records at the same time, each via the same form) it is not possible to use DataModules, and it becomes necessary for you to put the DataSet (Table, Query, etc.) and DataSource components on the forms that use them. This is because there is no good way to create multiple instances of DataModules and link the components within them to subsequent instances of the forms that use them. You will be responsible for maintaining synchronization between forms, but normally this is only necessary at the time that the forms are opened.

Of course, if you have no such need for multiple instances of the same form, you may use DataModules. The only reason to do so, though, would be to maintain the linkages between forms in an application, though it is, of course, possible to do so via code instead.

Therefore, we recommend against the use of DataModules — they create many more problems than they solve, and the problems they DO solve are generally not problems you will concern yourself with in a large database project. They are, perhaps, appropriate for smaller projects with only a small handful of tables that are self-contained and use only a few forms.

The MDI parent is responsible for providing much of the application framework - toolbars, basic menus, etc. Each MDI child is then responsible for communicating with the MDI parent for those specific resources it requires. For example, there may be need for the application to have several different toolbars available throughout the application, but a specific data-entry form might require the use of one of them. The MDI parent has the responsibility to make visible the toolbar(s) it requires and make invisible the toolbar(s) it doesn't require.

Menus

The MDI parent is responsible for providing a File, Windows & Help menu. A properly-built MDI application will provide a mechanism for the user to create additional child windows on an as-needed basis. The primary mechanism for doing so is via the menu. Word and Excel do so by opening additional documents, but a database does not have documents, per se, the way a word processor or spreadsheet do.

Thus, the File menu is responsible for providing the entire application to the end user. Specifically,

- File/Open should, instead of leading to a dialog box where a document is opened, load to popup menu(s) that contains each of the topmost forms that the user can access for performing work.
- File/Reports should lead to popup menu(s) that lead to dialog boxes that lead to report previewers.
- File/Maintenance should lead to topmost forms used to maintain lookup tables and the like.
- File/Utilities should lead to any application-specific utility functions that may be required.

The Windows and Help menus provide the standard functions they perform in other MDI applications.

Colors and Fonts

This is such a matter of personal style that we will not attempt to define them at all, other than to suggest that they be used as sparingly as possible.

Naming Conventions

Variable and Objects

We advocate the use of suffixes to communicate the type of a variable or object although we acknowledge that many people tend to prefer prefixes. There are many reasons for this:

- Suffixes read better (“CustForm” is read as “customer form”, while “FormCust” is read as “form used for customers” or “form that is customers”)
- The default behavior in naming persistent field objects is that the name of the field is appended to the name of the DataSet. Thus, a field named “AddressLine1” that is part of the “Cust” table would be named “CustTblAddressLine1” rather than “TblCustAddressLine1”. The “Tbl” in the middle of the name of the object serves to act as a separator and makes it clear where the name of the table ends and the name of the field begins. Prefixes cause an ambiguity. Is “TblCustAddressLine1” a field named “AddressLine1” part of the “Cust” table or a field named “Line1” part of the “CustAddress” table?
- While it *IS* possible to change the name of persistent field objects, it is INCREDIBLY tedious to do so. There are many table objects and attendant field objects throughout an application. Delphi’s convention in naming field objects is sufficient.
- It becomes easier to distinguish between Objects and Values that are created by you and those created by Borland, Woll 2 Woll, etc. They use prefixes and you can tell immediately whether the source for something is within your own code, or external. For example, consider ‘CustForm.FormStyle := FSMDIChild;’ and ‘CustForm.FormStyle := CurrentFS;’. In the first one, you know that “FSMDIChild” would not be something you created because it uses a prefix. In the second, you know that CurrentFS is part of your program by virtue of the suffix.

Once you decide TO name variables and objects, it becomes important to decide HOW to. We recommend the following:

- Variables that are non-object related require no suffix at all. It should be fairly obvious from context how a variable is being used. It is rarely important to know whether a variable is an integer, real, string, etc. and if it is important, it’s easy enough to track it down. Loop counters are named I, J, K, etc. (following the old Fortran tradition).
- You can take this overboard. We are aware of taking this to the extreme and creating suffixes for every possible object type. In the first place, with a dynamic tool such as Delphi, there is no such thing anyway as “every possible object type” and in the second place, you can always refer to the type declaration or the object inspector if you need to know the actual type of a specific object. It is very rare that you need to draw a distinction between a TButton, a TBitBtn or a TSpeedButton, for example, and a suffix of “Btn” is adequate for any of them.
- Only (re)name objects that are “important.” An “important” object is defined as one that is:
 - An object that is referenced by another object (such as a TDataSource) or
 - An object that is referenced somewhere in the code or
 - Has an event attached to the object.

Therefore, if you encounter an object named “Edit7” then you know that it is never referenced in the code and has no events associated with it. However, if you encounter an object named “DaysCalculatedEdit” then you know that there is something about it that you will be concerned about - an event or else it is referenced in your code (or both). These clues are very useful in allowing you to determine areas of interest and concern.

If there is not going to be multiple instances of a given object, then simply remove the number “1” added by Delphi in renaming the object. This becomes a clue that there is only 1 of them and that it is “important.”

- Important objects that are bound to the same DataSet must have the same prefix. Thus, “CustTbl”, “CustSrc” and “CustNoEdit” are all related to each other.
- Similarly, if you have a method that is attached to several different objects and/or events, you should rename it from the default name given it by Delphi (that is, Object Name concatenated with Event Name for the first object to which you attached the event). This becomes a clue, when you see the method, that it is being used in several places.
- Keep your suffixes simple. We recommend the following (this is by no means a complete list):

Form	Form used for normal user interaction
Rep	Form used for a QuickReport (or AceReporter or whatever reporting tool you are using)
FilterDlg	WWFilterDialog
Tbl	TTable or TWWTable or other descendant
Query	TQuery or TWWQuery or other descendant
Src	TDataSource or other descendant
Grid	TDBGrid or TWWDBGrid or other descendant
Btn	Any type of button

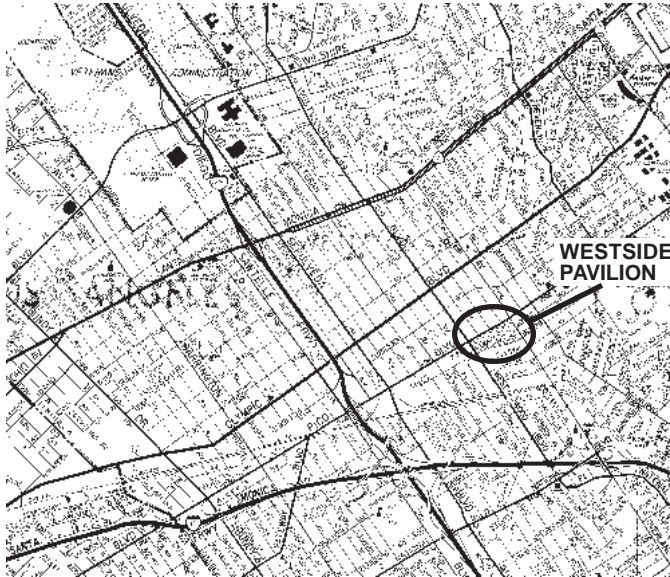
File Names

We urge you to restrict yourself to DOS 8.3 file names,

- VERY VERY STRONGLY for table names and for path names.
- And also in general.

Windows 95 and Netware support of long file names can frequently be problematic. The BDE has been known to have problems with long path names (ever try to restructure a table that was stored in a path that included a long file name?). Maybe someday these tools will be sufficiently mature to allow you to use long file names. In the meantime, why invite problems?

Directions to the Westside Pavilion in West Los Angeles



The WESTSIDE PAVILION is a large shopping mall 3 long blocks north of the Santa Monica (10) Freeway just east of the 405 Freeway at the corner of Overland and Pico Blvd. Parking is free. We will meet at 7 PM in the community room on the third floor, behind the food court. You're welcome to have a pre-meeting dinner or snack in the food court. There are a variety of food concessions

there, and most stay open until 8:30.

You can most easily reach the third floor food court by entering the parking lot at the entrance on Overland, just south of Pico. Proceed straight up to the third level (two levels from the street level) without turning. When you reach the third level, veer slightly to the left and drive past the ramp to the fourth level. If you park in this area of the third level, enter the building, go up a few steps, and go through the doorway on your left, which is just before you get to the food court. Go down the hallway and look for the meeting room on the left.

If you park near the Robinson•May entrance, enter the mall through Robinson•May's and go to the left toward the food court. Turn left as you get to the food court and go through the doorway toward the bathrooms and the pay phones. Once inside the doorway, turn right and go down the hallway and look for the meeting room, which will be on the left side just where a second hallway intersects from the right.

If you use any other entrance to the parking lot, you're on your own. Neal Koss reports that the Westside Pavilion is the absolute *WORST* parking lot in the entire world. Your best bet is to use the Overland entrance.

Announcements (Cont.)

Time to Renew Your Membership?

As you know, dues are a necessary part of keeping an active user group going. To find out if it's time to renew your membership, check the mailing label on your newsletter. If the "Member Until:" date is past, send in your renewal dues now. (See the handy form at the end of the newsletter.) If there is no date on the "Member Until:" line, you haven't paid; send your dues in right away.



LOS ANGELES DELPHI USER GROUP

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION and RENEWAL

Name: _____

Title: _____

Company: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____ (Add Country if not USA)

The above address is: Work Home

Phone - Office: _____

Phone - Home: _____

Phone - FAX: _____

E-mail: _____

Is this a: New membership Renewal

DUES: \$45/Year Make Checks Payable To: Los Angeles Delphi User Group

Send this application along with your check to:

Los Angeles Delphi User Group
 c/o Neal Koss, Treasurer
 International Informatics
 3655 Lomita Blvd., Suite 215
 Torrance, CA 90505-3933

For More Information Contact:
Richard Shaw, (310) 557-2600
 E-mail: 71210.423@compuserve.com

Please indicate current products and/or interests below:

- | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Delphi | <input type="checkbox"/> InterBase | <input type="checkbox"/> Paradox | <input type="checkbox"/> dBase | <input type="checkbox"/> Sybase |
| <input type="checkbox"/> M/S SQL Server | <input type="checkbox"/> Oracle | <input type="checkbox"/> Informix | <input type="checkbox"/> PowerBuilder | <input type="checkbox"/> Access |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SQL Windows | <input type="checkbox"/> JAM | <input type="checkbox"/> Visual Basic | <input type="checkbox"/> Windows | <input type="checkbox"/> WFW |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Windows NT | <input type="checkbox"/> Windows 95 | <input type="checkbox"/> OS/2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Unix | <input type="checkbox"/> DOS |

Others (describe): _____

How did you hear about LADUG? _____

Would you be willing to serve - As an officer? _____ On committees? _____

For LADUG Use:

Check #: _____ \$ _____ Date Received: _____ By: _____

It's Easy to Contribute to the Newsletter!

If you have a programming tip, opinion, or even an entire article to contribute, it's very easy to do so. It doesn't have to be a polished piece of writing. It might only be a little trick you learned. **Send your contribution in an e-mail message** to Steven Colagiovanni, at Steve_Cola@compuserve.com.

Improve Your Delphi Skills! Join the LADUG!

Want to hang out with other Delphi heads? Join us! Fill out the Membership Application attached to this newsletter and send with your check for \$45 (annual dues) made out to "Los Angeles Delphi User Group" to:

Los Angeles Delphi User Group
c/o Neal Koss, Treasurer
International Informatics
3655 Lomita Blvd., Suite 215
Torrance, CA 90505-3933

LOS ANGELES DELPHI USER GROUP

c/o Steven Colagiovanni, Newsletter Editor
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Los Angeles, CA 90019

Join us in learning about Delphi!