

PacketBoy v1.15

by Glen Neal

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DOCS for PacketBoy v1.15 by Glen Neal

A QWK compatible offline mail reader for Windows 3.1.

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Requirements

PacketBoy <g> requires Windows 3.1. A Soundblaster is recommended.

Description

PacketBoy is a QWK compatible offline mail reader for Windows.

There are tagline generation options for increased compatibility with non-qwk networks.

If you're not familiar with this concept, the purpose of an offline reader is to allow you to quickly exchange mail with a bbs once per day, or however often you wish, and then read/reply to the mail at your leisure.

The description of this process is rather more complicated than the actual day-to-day operation. You'll get the 'hang' of it quickly.

PacketBoy includes in version 1.xx features many readers leave out, such as a spell checker, message database manager and message router, tagline manager/stealer, phone/note list, multicolor message text even without ansi, resizable window, text import, export and printing, and word wrap with left and right margins, all in a simple to use and attractive Windows interface.

Now let me get down off my highhorse and let's see if we can't figure out why it isn't working for you...<g>

Files Included in Zip

Here is a list of files included with the zip file, and a description of what they do:

PB1xx.EXE	Version 1.xx series executable file. Main program.
PB.WRI	This document in Windows Write format.
PB.DOC	This document in ascii format.
PB.CFG	Main configuration file.
PB.PTH	Paths configuration file.
PB.SPL	Spelling dictionary, ascii.
PB.TAG	Tagline database, ascii.

PB.PHN Phone database, ascii.
PB.DBN Database name list, ascii.
PB.SND Sound files/paths list, ascii.
PB.HLP Help file in Windows Help format.

BWCC.DLL Borland Windows Custom Class dll. Put in Windows/System directory.

? .DB Various demo database files.
?.WAV Various system sound files.

You can delete any and all files (except the .exe !) and the program will still work!
If you get into a startup error condition try deleting the pb.cfg (setup system) file.
If this doesn't work, try deleting your pb.pth (setup paths) file also.

The ascii files pb.spl, pb.tag and pb.phn are ok to modify with a text editor.
Any or all the .wav files may be deleted to save disk space if you wish.

Quick Startup

Just unzip the files into whatever directory you wish to use.

When PacketBoy runs it will create any directories and files it needs.

When it can't find a packet it will present a file chooser dialog so you can open the first qwk packet. You cannot send out messages until you have opened your first packet, so the program will know the conference names and numbers.

If you do not have a bbs_name.QWK file, you must call a bbs and use their mail facilities to download a qwk packet. Before you download your first packet, use their conference/network selection facilities.

PacketBoy is fairly automatic. If you run it and it finds a qwk packet in the qwk directory, it will present the qwk manager/browser where you can manage and select a qwk packet to open.

If there are inbox messages still in the work directory, it will load the inbox without asking.

Unless...

If there are both qwk packet(s) and inbox mail waiting, it will ask if you want to delete the inbox mail. If you do, it will then present the qwk manager so you can select the next packet to open. If you don't, it will load the inbox mail instead.

If you fail to load any packet and have no inbox mail, it will default to loading the Default DB database, and show the color test pattern.

When you exit the program, if you have generated outbox mail, the program will ask if you want to export the outbox to a bbs_name.REP file. I will add a Reply Export option to the file menu soon, as well as an export manager in case you have generated reply packets to more than one bbs.

When it starts up, the program will also ask about deleting any outbox

or reply files it finds when it starts up.
Deleting or backing up these files automatically will be added
as system options, as I learn more about user's exact needs.

Menu Items

Here are the menu items and their functions:

File

File|Open Used to select and open a new message packet.

The packet manager has been expanded to include the qwk, rep and backup directories. You can now manage or open packets from any of these paths.

To open a new packet, select the packet and click on OK.

Use the QWK, REP and Backups buttons to view contents of these three paths. To locate a packet in another directory, use the Browse button.

While in QWK or REP paths, you can move a selected packet to the backups directory.

From any path, you can delete a selected packet with the Delete button.

This dialog comes up when PB is started, if the work directory is empty.

The view buttons are a quick way to select the Newest, Oldest or most Recent opened packet.

File|Save Zips a new bbs_name.REP reply packet. (not online yet)

File|Import Imports ascii text from a file, at the current cursor position.

File|Export Writes the current edit window to an ascii text file.

File|Print Prints the current edit window using Windows Print Manager.

File|Exit Saves current settings and exits the program.

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Edit|Cut Cuts the currently selected edit text to the clipboard.

Edit|Copy Copys the currently selected edit text to the clipboard.

Edit|Paste Pastes the current clipboard text to the current edit position.

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View|Welcome Shows the current bbs welcome screen, if present.

View|Bulletins Shows the current bbs bulletins, if present.

View|New Files Shows the current bbs new files list, if present.

View|Goodbye Shows the current bbs goodbye screen, if present.

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Message

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Conference

-

Database

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Setup

Setup|System

This dialog lets you set many of the technical system functions and appearance of the program. These settings are saved in the file named PB.CFG.

Widescreen/Letterbox mode

640x480 resolution Windows users can now see the full lines of the messages in color mode. To enable widescreen mode, locate the Button Bar group check boxes. Select Hide to hide all but the top two push buttons, and the color screen moves over to fill the void.

To disable widescreen mode, locate the Button Bar group check boxes again, and select Right.

The Left function will be implemented in a future version.

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Run

Run|User Editor

PacketBoy lets you use you favorite 'external' editor to edit your messages.

To setup your editor path, select the menu item Setup|Paths. Locate the item 'Name/Path-commands to ext. editor'.

The name of the file PB uses to exchange with your editor is USEREDIT.TXT.

If the editor is an .exe program in your path, you can just use the filename, such as:

NOTEPAD useredit.txt

This tells PacketBoy to run Notepad and also sends it the command line file to edit.

If the editor is not an .exe program, you have to use the program extension:

EDIT.COM useredit.txt

If the program is not in your path, use the full path/filename:

C:\ED\BOXER\BOXER.EXE useredit.txt

You might even have to use a full path/filename for the exchange file:

C:ED\BOXER\BOXER.EXE c:\telecom\pb\useredit.txt

These last two paths are just an example. Yours would be different.

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Help

Help|Index Shows very brief help. To get full Windows program help, click on the Help button.

Help|Write Help

This opens the .wri (write) version of the help file you are now reading.

Help|About Shows version number, and support bbs information. If you have not registered, there is also a button to register.

Detailed Operation

Well here it is version 1.xx and the docs are just getting started. Trouble is, like most programmers, that's the only part I really hate.

I've tried to make the operation of PacketBoy (hereafter known as PB) as automatic and easy to use as possible. But for those of you who do things the exact opposite of me, perhaps these docs will explain things in a way you will understand, and if you've never used an offline reader before (gawd forbid) then you should have a quick lookaround. (Don't worry, knowing myself, they're going to be none to long. :>)

The basic idea is for one person to call one system and exchange mail on a daily basis, or however often the user wishes. It is essentially untested, so I'm sure it's not going to be setup to serve all possible needs that users may come up with. I welcome your comments (the support bbs is 405-243-3200) and version one is my idea of what a reader should be, version two will be the user's version of the reader.

The program will create four directories when you first run it.

The QWK directory is where your telecom program should download the .qwk packets to. Use your favorite terminal communications program.

The REP directory is where the program will place your OUTBOX messages that you have created. When you exit the program, it asks if you want your outbox messages to be exported (zipped).

The WORK directory is where the program will unzip your .qwk packet into. This directory contains critical files, and should only be erased when you're about to unzip another .qwk packet. This directory also contains your inbox and outbox messages.

The BACKUPS directory is where PacketBoy will place your qwk and rep packets when requested to do so. This feature is almost finished.

I'm also thinking of adding a DATABASE directory for keeping all the database files in.

Future versions will manage these files more fully, but at present it will only delete them if you say yes to the questions. If you want backups you must manage those yourself for now. :<

How to Reply to a message:

The normal routine to reply to a message is to use the mouse to mark the area you want to quote. Then with the text still quoted click on REPLY. It will generate the reply screen which you may edit and add your reply to. Before editing and adding your replay, you may want to run the external editor function at this point. When finished, click on SEND and the message is added to the outbox.

For a new message, click and NEW and the rest is the same.

[To be expanded and continued...]

History (in reverse order)

v2.00 7-4-94 Version 2.0 on July 4th!

v1.21 6-?-94 Just this one last little feature...
v1.20 6-?-94 The sky's the limit. <g>
v1.19 5-?-94 RIP graphics detection/showing.
v1.18 5-?-94 Database Routing/Sorting/Packing.
v1.17 5-?-94 Ansi color detection/showing.

v1.15 4-28-94 Widescreen mode for 640x480 users.
v1.14 4-13-94 Sounds dialog. Multi-bbs aware. Thanks Judie!
v1.13 3-30-94 Color mode scroll bar, Slideshow & MUCH more!
v1.12 3-16-94 Improvements too numerous to mention.
v1.11 3-4-94 Slim version without so many .wav files.
v1.10 3-2-94 Word wrap online! Much faster spell check! Yeah!
v1.09 2-25-94 External editor online. More bug fixes. Thanks Jerry!
v1.08 2-20-94 Several DB bugs bite the dust. <g> QWK manager.
v1.07 2-16-94 Many improvements and bug fixes.
v1.06 2-11-94 Bug fix for loading packet. Thanks Bruce!
v1.05 2-10-94 Show bulletins added.
v1.04 2-6-94 Bug fix for loading packet. Thanks Carl!
v1.03 2-5-94 PCBoard color detection/showing, bug fixes.
v1.02 2-3-94 Bug fixes and minor spiffs.
v1.01 2-2-94 Bug fixes and minor spiffs.
v1.00 2-1-94 Release of PacketBoy v1.00. Cool!

Get the newest version 1.xx series while it's only \$25.00!

Version 2.xx series will start *July 4* of this year, and will cost \$50.00.

Register now and the upgrade after July 4 will only be \$10.00 - save \$15.00.

Your registration number is good for all version 1.xx series.

You'll get a new registration number for v2.xx but your reader serial number will stay the same.

Word Wrap Online

Word wrap with user definable left and right margins is working as of version 1.10!

This is a much-wanted feature, both by myself and the users. Since you cannot judge in the windows edit box how many characters you've typed, this is an especially welcome feature.

The default for the program is a left margin of 8 and right margin of 70.

To change these numbers from a minimum of 0 up to a maximum of 77, use the menu item Setup|System.

Yeah!

Right Mouse Button

PacketBoy uses the right mouse button.

In the blue header area:

Click left button in blue header area to switch to edit box mode.

Click right button in blue header area to switch to color graphics mode.

By doing this you can switch rapidly between modes.

In the color text area:

Click left button in color text area to select lines to quote one by one.

Click right button in color text area to select a whole paragraph.

You can also mark text in the edit box by clicking and dragging.

Keyboard Support

If you click on the message list box so it has the focus (turns inverse), the following keyboard keys can be used to parse messages:

Arrow keys for going forward or back one message at a time.

Page Up and Page Down for going a list box forward or back.

Control-Home and Control-End for going to the first and last message.

If you click on the Next or Last buttons, then spacebar will press that key for you, until it loses the focus.

Hotkeys:

Numeric Keypad:

1 (End) jump to End message.

2

3 (PgDn) goes forward 20 messages.

4 (Left) Last message.

5

6 (Right) Next message.

7 (Home) jump to First message.

8

9 (PgUp) goes back 20 messages.

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About the DB files

The database files aren't .dbf files, there simply message files in exactly the same format as used by the qwk system. I thought by having only one format of files, the program could use the same methods for manipulating both, and this has worked out very well, to good effect!

I'm using the first 128 byte 'master header' to store the english name of your database, since this first header isn't really used by the qwk system except in reply packets.

I'm also going to start using the 'password' field to store the name of the bbs the message came from, which is a rather clever way to do it so the reader won't have to have extra files to keep track of this information.

If you ever had need to do so, you could even 'trick' another reader into reading my .db files by renaming one 'messages.dat' and putting it your reader's work directory, although I don't know why you would ever need to do this. <g>

Secret Features

You can get all three bottom list boxes up at once by:

Click on menu items Message|List, then Conference|List, then Database|List.

Don't click on anything else in between. Neat.

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There is a secret function in the Setup|Taglines dialog. Have you found it? :->

Hint: It's the only dialog where the PacketBoy icon does something.

THIS IS SHAREWARE!

You may try out this program for a reasonable time. If you continue to use it, please register it.

This shareware version is NOT crippled in any way! It simply reminds you to register, once for every 5 times you use it.

I have my doubts about this shareware business. We will see about honor.

WHY SHOULD I REGISTER?

Aside from freedom of guilt and a good nights sleep, here's what you get:

- + A disk containing the latest, NO NAG, NO DATE LIMIT version.
- + A megabyte of wave files on the disk to use.
- + Full access to the support bbs PC-Oklahoma for three months.
- + This documentation in printed form. (\$10.00 more by mail)
- + Your registration number will work with all version 1.xx series.

HOW DO I PAY TO REGISTER?

- + Online, using Visa, Mastercard or Discover by calling the support bbs at 405-243-3200. After you are online, type CHARGE at the main prompt, then select item 2, then select item 1. You'll see how, it's easy.

Download registered version online for \$25.00.

- + By voice, using Visa, Mastercard or Discover by calling me at 405-243-0574.
- + By mail, send check, money order, or credit card number.

Glen Neal
220 Ridgecrest #45
Elk City, OK 73644

By mail it's \$35.00, which includes this document printed.

Sorry, I'm just starting. I don't have fancy books printed yet. <g>

HOW DO I REGISTER THE PROGRAM?

If you stay online on the bbs long enough (page me) for me to verify your credit card, I can give you your registration number right then.

Otherwise, call back and I'll have a personal message waiting in the main conference which has your registration number. If you prefer, you may call my voice number to register and get your registration number.

If you've ordered by mail, I'll send it with your disk, etc.

In the program, select the menu item Help|About, then select the Register button. Type in your name, and registration number. You must type in your registration number EXACTLY as I gave it to you, with no extra or missing characters.

After you register, all register buttons will vanish, and the program will no longer 'nag' each 5 times it is run. It will also not expire in the future.

However, keep looking for new versions. I can put out a new version in minutes, rather faster than those large sluggish companies. <g>

Keep your registration number. If you delete your pb.cfg file, or if you get a new version and the program deletes it for you, you'll have to re-register using the register button and your registration number again!

HOW DO I GET SUPPORT?

- + Online, call the support bbs PC-Oklahoma at 405-243-3200.
Page the sysop, or better yet, leave the sysop a comment or message.

Do NOT post your registration number on the bbs!

- + By voice, call me at 405-243-0574.

HOW DO I GET THE NEWEST VERSION?

- + Call the support bbs PC-Oklahoma at 405-243-3200.
New versions are posted regularly.
- + To get newest version download PB1???.ZIP, the bbs can locate this name.
(No need to search)
- + I have over a dozen Windows 3.1 products for you to try. All are available for downloading on your fist call.

TROUBLESHOOTING

- + I am constantly adding items and changing the configuration file, PB.CFG. When you get a new version, it's a good idea to first delete your config file. The paths are in a separate file (PB.PTH) so at least you don't lose those. <g> If you delete your config file, you'll be back in shareware mode, so keep the registration number I give you, or put the number in a file for the future. <g>
- + If you get the message saying BWCC.DLL was not found, or error = -1, call the support bbs at 405-243-3200 and download BWCCDLL.ZIP.

Unzip it into your Windows System folder. No need to restart windows.

Other windows programs will need this DLL also. It is similar to the DLL used by Visual Basic, VBRUNx00.DLL.

+ If it says a sound driver is not installed, go to the Windows control panel, and run the Sounds icon. Select ADD, and pick a Soundblaster driver that is for your card version.

I hope to add support for other sound cards and the pc speaker soon.

Known Bugs

1. 640x480 users cannot see all the text in color mode

-and-

2. There is no scroll bar in color mode.

3. Ansi mode not working properly yet.

4. Text in combo boxes not in neat columns.

5. Dictionary is still too small.

6. RIP mode not online at all yet.

7. Not marking messages as read.

8. Several other dialogs not online yet.

I'm aware of these problems and they will all be fixed soon in future versions. Right now I'm putting up a new version about every 2 weeks, often at noon on Wednesday. The support bbs number is 405-243-3200. You can always call and download the newest version (on the first call).

Attitude

I'm always interested in features people want. I only know how I use the reader, I have no idea how other users on other systems might want to use it. Please feel free to call me or the bbs and suggest new features.

Please call the support bbs if you have problems or discover a bug(!).

Join the PacketBoy conference by typing PB and hitting return.

End of Documentation