



## Newsletter of ABC Accounts software

December 2009

### Introduction

Although much communication and news now travels by email, we do occasionally send paper newsletters to remind us of the old days. It is sobering to consider that ABC was on sale before Windows™ was even invented. I designed ABC back in 1983 and I'm still working on it, hoping to perfect it one day. This issue describes the current ABC program, and highlights a few new features you may not have discovered, like Standing Orders, and Label printing.

*Chris Hicks*



Reviews suggest the new Windows 7 is excellent and if you buy a new computer with it you will be happy. But there is no easy upgrade route from Windows XP so if your existing computer is working OK there is no compelling reason to change.

### VAT rate change

In January 2010 you need to change the VAT Rate for VAT Code 1 from 15% back to 17.5%. In both ABC5 and ABC6 do this with Accounts Utilities > Edit VAT rates. And if you have more than one company set up, you need to do this for each company.

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### The future of ABC5

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We stopped selling the old DOS ABC5 about 4 years ago though we will continue to support it (ie. answer questions and fix any reported bugs). But we do think it is time to upgrade to ABC6. As computers get faster and more powerful, DOS based programs



are being left far behind. At some point you will buy a new printer or computer that doesn't support DOS and then the easiest solution will be ABC6. Or maybe you are getting tired of the laughter of family and friends at the sight of your old fashioned ABC5 screens and printouts.

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## Latest updates

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Our website has the latest version of your ABC5, ABC6, and Payroll programs. These include all enhancements and bug fixes we've made over the years. You can download these free of charge, and we recommend you check at least once a month.

If you have any old ABC floppy disks or CDs – please throw them away as they are now out of date. If you do not have easy internet access we will be pleased to send you an update CD by post.

To install ABC onto a new computer you should download the full *trial* installation – this trial version of ABC can then be unlocked by restoring your data files (or entering a *key* that we supply when you purchase ABC).

## User Forum

You probably know about the ABC Forum, and are ignoring it -- this keeps it a very quiet place. But please do use it if you need help or advice. It is a section of our website where you can ask

questions, suggest new features, or just chat to other ABC users. You can use a nickname if you are shy.

Anyone can read the messages, but to keep out riff raff (ie spam robots and people offering you millions of pounds from Nigeria) you need to register before you can write messages.

The Forum is open 24 hours a day and free, and ABC staff do answer questions there as well.

## After Sales Support

If you have paid for After Sales Support we are always pleased to spend time on the phone helping you, or talking you through finding solutions to problems.

And we'll usually send you update CDs and customise reports etc, free of charge.

But if you have chosen not to pay for Support, please **do not phone and ask for help**. Instead you can use the free User Forum or email to explain your problem. Or even better, pay a small annual fee and then phone as often as you need.

## Multi-user ABC

If your business has grown you might find it useful to allow more than one computer to use ABC at the same time. Just upgrade to the Network version of ABC.

It is easy and simple to do.

## Dot Matrix printers

Windows™ was designed to send one page at a time to the printer. This is what inkjets and laser printers require, but does not work very well with old dot matrix printers. After much research and creative thinking (oh, alright, we paid some clever people to do it) we managed to get ABC6 to happily print line-by-line to a dot matrix – basically just for those of you who need to print onto multi-part sets, or who have large stocks of pre-printed stationary.

For all the other printing in ABC6 you will have to put up with the beautiful full page, full colour, easy to read, stylish modern reports that can be churned out at blinding speed on any cheap inkjet or laser.

## Your company logo

The trial version of ABC6 has a dummy company logo (a bunch of flowers) that prints at the top of every report. You are supposed to replace the flowers with your own company logo or picture – it only takes a couple of mouse clicks and if you don't have a suitable picture we will be pleased to find or create one for you for a small charge. It really does give a good impression to your customers.

## ABC cosmetics

Our first attempts at a Windows version of ABC had us trying to



ABC6 reports printed on a cheap inkjet are colourful and easy to read, and very very fast.

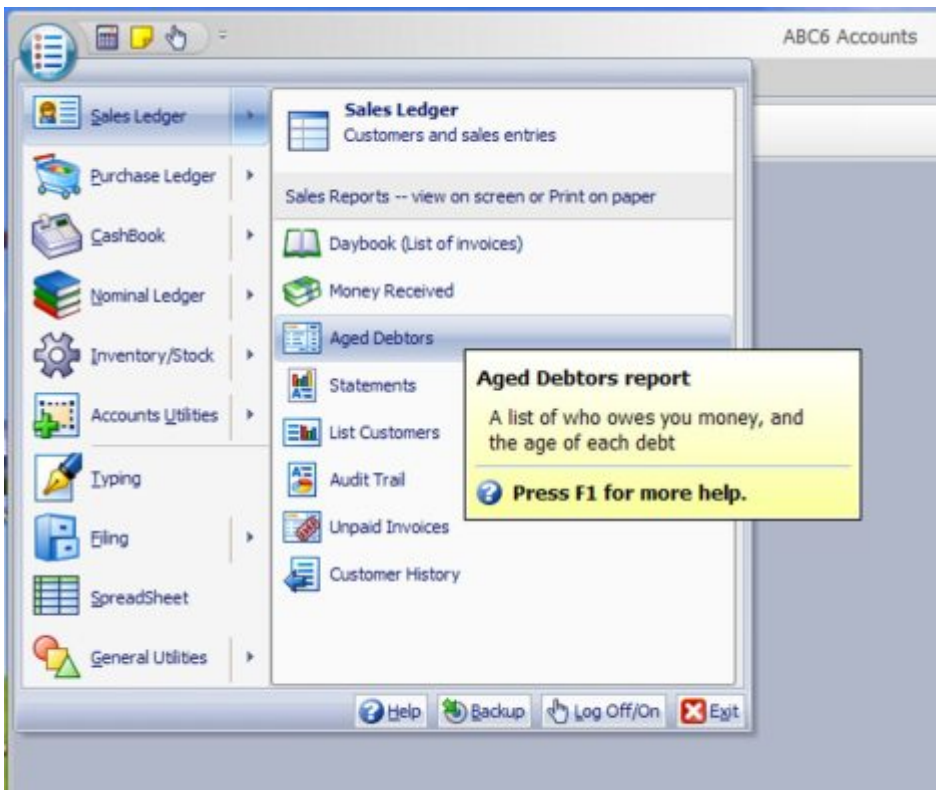
retain the look of the familiar old DOS programs. But then we read an article about software screen design that pointed out Microsoft spends hundreds of millions of dollars on usability research to come up with the design of MS Office™. Maybe it was stupid of little companies like us to think we could do better. So we have licenced the 2007 MS Office User Interface from Microsoft, and produced ABC6.2. It now looks similar to other programs, and is smart and



professional. Any user of MS Office™ will find it familiar. But we have retained many of the familiar old ABC keystrokes (eg press F5 to Finish).

## Backing up

Every newsletter I've ever written has contained a paragraph exhorting you to please make



regular backups. And it is still just as important.

Both ABC5 and ABC6 make it really easy to backup to another drive or a little flash-drive (memory stick). It typically takes a few seconds, so you can do it every night (or at least weekly).

## Time to upgrade

It is hard to believe that ABC6 has been on sale for over 5 years.

That's long enough for Microsoft to have brought out a brand new version of Windows, and then to write and release the next new version of Windows. So I think it's fair to say ABC6 by now is tried and tested.

If you are still using ABC5, you should now consider changing up to ABC6. Not convinced of the advantages? Ask us for a free information pack with lists of benefits, and some actual sample reports, to see what you're missing.

## New tricks

There is a saying about old dogs that may be true, but our long standing ABC users are not really like that at all.

One thing that really makes our day here at the ABC Old Computer Home, is when we get phone calls from people who were reluctantly forced to change from their beloved well worn old ABC5 to the shiny new ABC6 – and they actually go to the trouble

to ring up and tell us they love the new ABC6. And wish they'd changed to it years ago.

## ABC6 is more reliable

It may be tempting fate to say this, but in all the time ABC6 has been available we have not had a single report of anyone losing data or having their database corrupted. True, the computer or the program can crash. But this has never harmed the accounts data.

Contrast this with older versions of ABC where Mr Data Corruption and Ms Lost Index were regular visitors.

The reason for the difference is that the database engine in ABC5 is about 16k in size, while the ABC6 database library is a slightly larger 6200k in size. The ABC6 disk files are also correspondingly larger (fortunately this is no problem since all modern computers have huge amounts of memory and disk space).

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## Recent enhancements

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Here are a few of the features we have added or improved in ABC6 recently.

### Update Stock

While entering Unpaid Bills in the Purchase Ledger, ABC6 now

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also allows you to enter the quantities of stock items received and thereby update your stock levels. This was one of the most requested feature, so I hope you enjoy using it.

## Standing Orders

ABC6 can store your regular CashBook payments (eg Standing Orders) or income. And then you can simply tick the ones you wish to use and click a button to post these to the accounts. There are safeguards to stop you accidentally posting the same item more than once in a month.

## Address labels or envelopes

While looking at a customer or supplier record on the screen, you have the option to print an address label or an envelope for them. I have three printers connected to the office computer, including an old dot matrix printer just for printing quick address labels.

In fact you can use the label or envelope printing feature at any time by selecting it from the Quick Access toolbar (top left of the screen – it's like the F9 Key functions of ABC5), and then typing an address or note to print.

The FILING Label Print function has recently been greatly enhanced – it produced the label

for sending you this Newsletter.

## New report options

Many reports in ABC6 now have extra buttons on the report viewer toolbar. These allow you to Sort the report into different order, or to hide or show Details. For an example, take a look at the Sales Ledger > Aged Debtors



report.

You can also export any ABC6 report as a PDF or RTF (Word) or CSV file, for example to email or post on a website or import into some other software.

## Tidy your files

ABC6 has a utility function to "compact" the database files. This process removes blank space that accumulates and also rebuilds all the indexes. The result is smaller and faster disk files. ABC performs this operation from time to time, but you can also do it whenever you like by selecting it from the Utility Menu.

## Import Customers into Spreadsheet

The ABC6 spreadsheet has functions to import parts of your accounts data. For example, import your customers and display them in different colours to indicate who owes you money, etc). Similarly for Suppliers and Stock.

This might allow you to manipulate the data in various ways. Only a copy of the data is used, so nothing you do here will upset your accounts.

We can easily add more features like this if you have any suggestions.

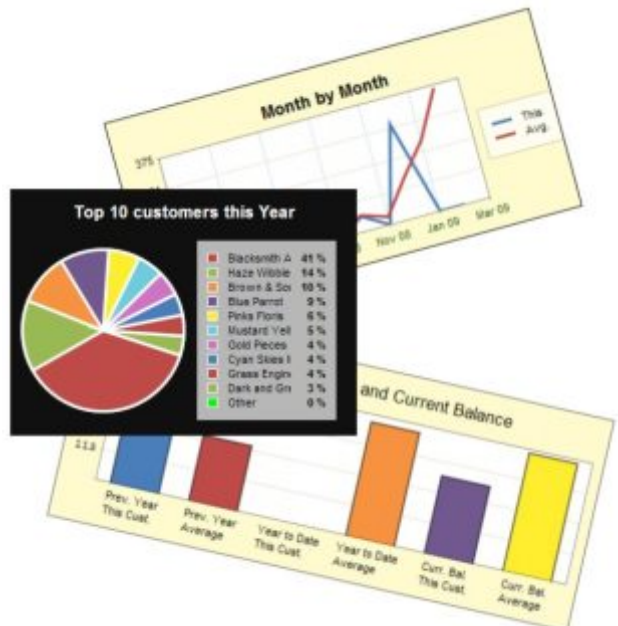
## Charts or Graphs

We have improved the charts (graphs) that are found on the customer and supplier record cards. As well as more options we have added buttons that allow you to Print, Copy to Clipboard, or Save to disk. This makes it easy for you to incorporate a chart into some other part of ABC or any other software.

## Custom Reports and Utilities

We can use our great experience and weird programming skills to produce special custom reports or programs for you. To show you what we mean, there are a few examples with your standard ABC6 program. Go to the General Utilities section of the Main Menu and look for Custom Reports and Custom Programs. These are just to show the concept.

If you need something special adding to ABC, maybe to suit your trade or business, or provide a complicated report or chart, contact us for a price (typically in the low hundreds of pounds).



In the past we have produced special reports for banks or factoring companies, utilities to consolidate the books of several businesses together for head office, input routines for specialist manufacturing software (ie. automatically produce invoices using ABC), and maintain a file of Prospects that can be moved into Customers if they buy something.

If you are spending even a few hours a month on some task that the computer could do for you, it might be cost effective to get a custom addition to ABC.

## Internet technology

Although we proudly claim to always stay a year or two behind the cutting edge of technology (to avoid the usual teething problems) ABC6 does now have some internet functions. For example you can just press a button in ABC6 to call up the website or User Forum, or to check for software updates. (Your computer does need to be connected to the internet for this to work).

And you will soon be able with ABC6 to send automatic email statements or messages to customers (or to the complaints

department of ABC if you think the program could be improved).

## What next?

We are working on new ideas for ABC6, including integrated email, a neat Calendar and Appointment Diary, and Purchase Order Processing.

There is also an option to import accounts data from other programs – for example a well known garage package dedicated to Servicing and MOT requirements can now send data to ABC6 for automatic invoicing. Who comes up with all these wacky ideas? You do, of course! We just sit here and listen to your suggestions. That's what determines new functions and modules for ABC.

As we've always said – if you don't like something, tell us and we'll try to fix it.

We look forward to hearing from you.



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