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Advisor Answers

Y2K issue with file dates

VFP 5.0

Q: When I do DIR *.DBF, FoxPro displays the table's century as 1900. Verifying it with DOS or Windows, it is 2000! What's going on here?

—Joseph Showalter (via Advisor.COM)

A: You've encountered the one known Y2K issue in Visual FoxPro 5.0. The last update date of a table is stored in the table header in a format that has room for only two digits of the year. In FoxPro 2.x and Visual FoxPro through 5.0, the LUPDATE() function reads the table header to get this information. Beginning in VFP 6, LUPDATE() instead asks the operating system for the last update date of the file. This change is documented in the VFP 6 Help file.

It appears that VFP's version of the DIR command makes the same distinction, though it's undocumented. Another command affected is DISPLAY/LIST STRUCTURE, which shows the last update date in its heading.

Microsoft has provided VFP 5 developers with a solution to the LUPDATE() problem. Their Year 2000 Readiness web site (<http://msdn.microsoft.com/vstudio/y2k/default.asp>) includes a patch you can download to make VFP 5 handle LUPDATE() the same way VFP 6 does. Be forewarned – the download is about 3.5 MB.

Unfortunately, that patch does not fix the other Y2K problems. DIR and DISPLAY/LIST STRUCTURE still rely on the date in the table header. Fortunately, neither of these commands is likely to find their way into code for end-users. As a developer, you can probably live with glitches like these until you're ready to upgrade to VFP 6 or a later version. If you really need this kind of output in your development environment, it's possible to write your own tools that provides it using the built-in functions. DIR can be simulated using ADIR(), RECCOUNT(), FDATE() and FSIZE(). Your own version of DISPLAY/LIST STRUCTURE can be created using AFIELDS(), RECCOUNT(), FDATE(), SYS(2012), and CPDBF().

–Tamar