Newsletter #26 (Aug 27, 2006)

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What's New

RV Park Reviews -- See what others think

We found a very active review site containing over 18,000 campground and RV park reviews with comments by campers, covering U.S. and Canada parks. There's a good chance that your park already has a few reviews entered for it, and most reviews are fairly detailed about what they do or don't like. It's a good way to find out how your park (and its staff) is perceived by the average visitor, possibly pointing out some things that need to be improved. I know if I were a park owner, this would be required reading at least once a week to see if any new comments were posted (and it's not a bad way to check up on the nearby competition either).

Here's the review site:
http://www.rvparkreviews.com

Don't forget that thousands of your potential customers are also looking at this site!

Campground Master for Hand-helds

Before you get too excited, there still isn't a version that will work on a Palm, "Windows CE" or "Windows Mobile" PDA. The primary issue is that the memory required for the application is beyond what most of these devices support, and we're not able to justify the development of a special cut-down PDA version based on the few requests for it.

However there is good news -- new hand-held "UMPC" devices that run a full version of Windows XP and have plenty of memory to run Campground Master are now available. We have verified that Campground Master will run on the new Sony VAIO UX computer, which is just slightly larger than a typical PDA (and it can be used in portrait-mode with a stylus, just like a Palm).

This new Sony computer is a bit pricey, starting at over $1500, but other UMPC computers that will probably work fine are less expensive (but have not yet been tested). These include the OQO O1+, the TabletKiosk v7110, and the Samsung Q1. No doubt the prices of these will keep dropping as they become more common. You can find out more about these at this web site (it's a great site for technology junkies, by the way):
http://www.dynamism.com/

Just one word of warning -- the screens on these are high-resolution and small, which means the text will be VERY tiny. While it's possible to zoom in as needed (at least on the Sony), we certainly wouldn't recommend these for a extended use due to the strain on your eyes.

Synchronize your Time Zones

We've discovered that running Campground Master on computers with different time zones will affect the time (and possibly the dates) stored in the database. This is because the times are stored relative to GMT. For instance if you make a transaction at 1:00 PM on a computer that's set to east coast time, then when you load that database on a computer set to west coast time it will show up as being made at 11:00AM.

We will correct this in the next version -- but in the meantime, make sure the time zone is set the same on all computers -- especially if you're networked. To check and change the time zone, you can usually right-click on the clock in the lower right corner (on the Windows taskbar), select Adjust Date/Time, and select the Time Zone tab. If you find any that are already set to a different zone, then close Campground Master first, change the time zone setting, and then re-open Campground Master. If you're networked, also 'Request a Full Database refresh' on each client computer afterwards (under Maintenance / Network Functions).

Beware of credit card company claims

We have been alerted that at least one credit card service provider is contacting some of our customers claiming that they "fit right in" with Campground Master, without informing clients what the real requirements are.

While it is true that Campground Master will work with nearly any U.S. or Canadian merchant service, it's not automatic. An additional software program, either "IC Verify" or "X-Charge", is required for a credit card company to integrate with Campground Master. In addition, a card swipe and receipt printer that is designed to interface with the computer must be used -- standalone "terminals" designed for phone lines will not work.

You can get all of the necessary equipment from us (and the X-Charge software is provided for free if you use CAM Commerce for your credit card processing), so yes it can be easily done -- just be aware that there are certain requirements and expenses involved even if the credit card company claims to "fit right in" with Campground Master.

For more details, see this web page:
http://Campground-Master.com/creditcards.html

Q & A

Showing more dates in the Rack

Q: The Rack only scrolls far enough to see 3 months ahead. Can I extend it to see more without having to change the "To" date each time?

A: Yes, it can include up to a year in advance (and 3 months behind) by default. Click the "Options" button on the Rack and change the "Default future days" and "Default past days" to suit your preferences. Just be aware that the more days it includes, the slower it will be (which is the main reason it's limited by default), so if you don't need to see that far ahead very often then it might be better to just change the "To" date when you need to see farther. Since machines are getting faster, though, the next version will allow the default future and past days to be up to 999.

Printing a list of available sites

Q: How can I print a sites available list to give to customers, so they can drive thru the park and look at sites that are available during their time frame.

A: Put the time frame needed in the "From" and "To" dates on the Rack, then check "Available Only" to show only those available, and also check "Show Range" so that it only shows those dates. Then you can print that list for the customer (File / Print, or click the printer icon on the toolbar).

Miscellaneous refunds from the cash drawer

Q: How can I enter a credit for pop machine refunds, and show that the money was given to them from our cash drawer balance?

A: This is basically like entering a negative sale. Use the P.O.S. if you have it, or else use Unbound Transactions (basically just click the cash register icon in the toolbar). Enter a Charge transaction with a negative amount (so it's like a return) and select an appropriate category, and then enter a Refund transaction to show money removed from cash drawer. If you can't enter a negative charge then you can also use a Credit transction, though this is less desirable for reporting reasons.

Owners can't be checked in

Q: It seems when I set up a Reservation under an "Owner" type, it does not allow the check-in option to work. What am I doing wrong?

A: "Owner" reservation types are intended for people who actually own a lot (e.g. in situations where they might sub-lease it or at least not be on the site constantly). As such, this type of reservation is typically entered as a multi-year reservation just to track the lot owner, which also allows putting various charges toward the owner of the lot instead of the current renter/occupant. This is only a "background" reservation and does not affect the availability of the site, although the owner's name will appear on the Rack in a light grey color (there is also an option to hide the owner names if desired).

Therefore there is no checked-in or checked-out status for owners, since they're not assumed to be there all the time anyway. Owner reservations could also be use for "seasonal" reservations where someone rents the site for the season but only come on weekends, for instance.

So now when making a reservation for someone actually staying on the site, or to track the actual occupancy of the "owner" himself, a Normal type reservation should be used (on "top" of the Owner reservation). Of course Monthly or other types can also be used, as long as it's not another Owner reservation.

Tips & Techniques

Color-coding the Sites on the Rack

In version 4.0 you can define custom Color Schemes to be used many places. One simple example of this is color-coding the Site and/or Type columns of the Rack for better clarity of the type of site, or even change the color based on some other attribute of the site. It would be easy to get carried away with the possibilities, so you probably want to keep it simple and just consider the most important factors.

There's already a sample color scheme that you can import, which colors the sites by Site Type. With a little experimentation in the sample and by changing the field used in the expressions, you could define different colors for each site, or different colors based on some other site attribute field like "50A".

First you need to import the sample -- see the documentation under Maintenance / Advanced Customizations / Color Schemes for basic info and information on importing the samples. Here's an online link: http://campgroundmaster.com/help/colorschemes.html

The sample file to look for when importing is "Sample Color Scheme - Rack sites, by type".

Once you have the sample imported, go to Maintenance / Advanced Customizations / Select Global Color Schemes. For the entry "Override Site headings with color scheme", select the color scheme imported above and then Save it. Assuming you still use any of the original Site Types, then some of the sites should change color. To tailor it to your own Site Types pick list entry names, go back to the Color Schemes setup and edit the rules for each color -- e.g. change the names in the Condition expression to match the actual Site Types you use. Of course you can also change the colors used, as well as add or delete colors, etc. as needed.

Forcing Reservation fields to be filled in

Some users have asked if it's possible to force certain fields to be filled in, for instance to not allow a reservation be completed without the # Adults and # Children numbers filled in. This is possible in version 4.0 through the Dialogs definitions.

1. The first step is to add a Dialog definition that's an Add-on to the New Reservation dialog. Go to Maintenance / Advanced Customizations / Dialogs, and click "Add dialog definition".

Note: Only one Add-on definition can be active for a given dialog, so if you already had such a definition then you would just add elements on to the existing one instead of creating a new one here (in which case, skip to step 3).

2. Give it a name, such as "New Reservation add-on". Then check the "Add-on" box and select "New Reservation" from the list. We're not adding any new controls to it, so the Width and Height values can remain 0.

3. Now we need to add an action to the dialog that checks the # Adults field, showing an error message and preventing the reservation from being saved if # Adults is blank. Click "Add Element", and for the element type select "Action on data saved".

4. We don't really need a Condition for this element (we always want it to force the field), though you might want to add a condition so that only non-administrators are restricted, for instance.. In that case you could put in the following Condition:

```
CurrentOpLevel() < 5
```

5. Now for the Action expression, which will be executed when the reservation is saved (e.g. "Done", "Continue", or any other button clicked that would normally save the reservation). We won't go into the design details, but it should be fairly self-explanatory if you look up the components in the Function Reference of the Advanced Customizations documentation. Also note that we need the Control ID of the # Adults field, which can be looked up in the Dialog Control ID reference. This can be found online here: http://campgroundmaster.com/help/basedialogs.html.

Enter this for the Action expression:

```
IIFQ( Empty(DlgGetCtrlText(1079)),
     'Eval(MessageBox("# Adults must be filled in",0,2), DlgSetFocusCtrl(1079), .F.)',
     '.T.')
```

A few notes about the expression:
- It's broken into 3 lines for readability here, but it must be continuous (no line breaks) when you enter it.
- IIFQ is used instead of IIF, because we don't want both of the result expressions to be evaluated (which would result in the error showing up no matter what).
- If the "Adults" field is empty, it does the Eval( ) function, else it simply returns True.
- The Eval function does 3 things in sequence: Shows the error message, sets the keyboard focus to the field (for convenience), and returns False to abort the saving process.

6. We also need to check both of the boxes -- "Execute the action before..." and "Abort the operation...". Obviously we want to make sure this condition is met before actually saving the reservation, and if the # Adults is not filled in then we don't want to save the reservation yet.

7. Now just Save the element, and we're done with the customization for checking the # Adults field. You can easily Copy the element to do the same check on the Children field (just change the Control ID to 1080, and change the error message text), or any other verifications you want to do. Once you're all finished, just Save everything and try it out.

Showing a "Rules" prompt when making a reservation.

The previous example of modifying the New Reservation dialog to add extra prompts can also be extended or other special cases. (Version 4.0 required.)

This example shows how to add a prompt for the reservationist to read certain rules to the person reserving the site, before continuing.

1. The first step is to add a Dialog definition that's an Add-on to the New Reservation dialog. Go to Maintenance / Advanced Customizations / Dialogs, and click "Add dialog definition".

Note: Only one Add-on definition can be active for a given dialog, so if you already had such a definition, e.g. from the previous example, then you would just Edit the existing one and add Elements to it, instead of creating a new one here (skip to step 3).

2. Give it a name, such as "New Reservation add-on". Then check the "Add-on" box and select "New Reservation" from the list. We're not adding any new controls to it, so the Width and Height values can remain 0.

3. Now we need to add an action to the dialog that shows a prompt every time they save the reservation. Click "Add Element", and for the element type select "Action on data saved".

4. We don't really need a Condition for this element (we always want it to show the prompt). Even though we might not want to show it based on certain things about the reservation, we can't put this in the Condition expression because the Condition is only evaluated when the dialog is first created, not when the action is triggered.

5. Now we need to add an Action expression, which will be executed when the reservation is saved (e.g. "Done", "Continue", or any other button clicked that would normally save the reservation). Enter the following Action expression to show a prompt with a simple OK button:

```
MessageBox("TELL THE CUSTOMER: \n\n Deposit is due in 10 days.")
```

Note that you can add as much text as you want in the message, but you can't enter line breaks when you type the expression text. Instead, insert the characters "\n" wherever you want to start a new line (two in a row, as shown above, makes a blank line).

6. Now just Save the element, and we're done with the customization.

Showing Reservation Notes upon check-in

When a reservation is checked in, it might be nice to show a pop-up window with any Notes that reservation has -- especially if the customer's Warning Flag is set. This example shows how you can create an Event Action to do that in version 4.0.

1. The first step is to add an Event Action. Go to Maintenance / Advanced Customizations / Event Actions, and click "Add event action".

2. Give it a name, such as "Check-In Warning & Notes".

3. For the Event Trigger, select "Check-in reservation, before". We want to do it before the check-in process is done, in case the notes impact how we handle the check-in. We're also going to add an option to this action which allows the operator to cancel the check-in, so that's another reason it must be a "before" trigger.

4. We only want to do this action if they have the warning flag checked, so enter this for the Condition:

```
Cust:Cust_Warning_Flag = .T.
```

(Technically you could leave out the "= .T." part since the boolean result would be the same either way, but this is included here for clarity.)

5. Now for the action expression -- we want to show a Yes/No prompt which shows that the customer has a warning flag, show any Reservation Notes along with that, and offer the option to continue the check-in or not. This can all be done with this expression:

```
MessageBox("Customer has a warning flag! \n\n Reservation Notes: \n\n" +
           Resv:Resv_Notes + "\n\n Continue with Check-In?", 2, 1) = 2
```

A few notes about the expression:
- It's broken into 2 lines for readability here, but it must be continuous when you enter it.
- Text values are concatenated simply by using "+" between them as shown above
- Insert the characters "\n" wherever you want to start a new line (two in a row, as shown above, makes a blank line).
- It's not actually necessary to have spaces around the "\n", that's just for readability
- The "2, 1" parameters at the end tell it to have Yes/No options and show a warning icon
- We compare the result with 2, which is the value returned if Yes is clicked. Thus if they click No, this expression returns False.

6. We also need to check the box "Abort the event or operation...", so if they don't answer Yes then the check-in does not continue.

<u>Simplified to always show notes:</u>

If you only want to show the notes (if any) but you don't care about whether the warning flag is set and you don't need to abort the check-in, then make these changes:

Replace the condition in step 4 with:
```
!Empty(Resv:Resv_Notes)
```

Simplify the expression in step 5 to:
```
MessageBox("Reservation Notes: \n\n" + Resv:Resv_Notes)
```

Don't check the "Abort..." box in step 6

In fact, you might want to do both -- show the message with the option to cancel if they have a warning, otherwise just show the notes if they have any. In this case, you can use two separate Event Actions. The first one would be the original Event Action covered above, and the second one would be the simplified version with one change to the Condition:

```
!Empty(Resv:Resv_Notes) AND !Cust:Cust_Warning_Flag
```

This way it won't show the notes twice if they do have a warning flag (assuming they click 'Yes" to continue anyway).

You may think of other things that you want to validate upon check-in, so you can add other Event Actions as needed -- you can have as many Events as you like, even for the same trigger, and they will all be executed in sequence (unless one "aborts" the operation as this one could do, of course).