

The Journal

A publication for users of SquareSum's DREAM Corporate Accounting System **f** Issue 8 **e** September 1999

DREAM Summer University Graduates



Nottingham, July 1999

**Design for a
Bookkeeping
System**

**Peppers
Cable
Glands**

**Some
Education
Needed!**

New Users

Welcome to the following new users of DREAM who have joined the community in the four months since the last issue of *The Journal*:

- Albright (Engineers), Whitchurch
- Stourbridge College, Stourbridge
- Rodale Press, London
- Gordon & Mcphail, Elgin
- DIP Systems, Guildford
- Office Holdings, London
- Atlantic Marine, Hamilton, Bermuda
- Anglo/CDT, Leeds
- Annesland College, Glasgow
- LAWTEC, Preston
- Bishop Auckland College, Bishop Auckland
- Kendal College, Kendal
- New College Nottingham, Nottingham
- Jesus College, Cambridge
- Sparsholt College, Winchester
- Fatty Arbuckle American Diners, Manchester
- Bibendum Wines, London
- Dtech Memory Corporation, Basingstoke



Enhancements

The September 1999 enhancement ballot has been posted to all members together with a voting form. The outcome of the ballot will be announced at the user group meeting at Worcester on 14 October, and Philip Taylor, CEO of SquareSum, will discuss the implementation of the top voted enhancements.

1999 financials

SquareSum's accounts for the year to May 1999 show a massive 95 per cent rise in sales, to £2.8m, with a more than two-fold increase in pre-tax profits to just over £580,000. Turnover has grown by an average of 80 per cent per annum in the four years since 1995.

Member Register

The updated 'register of members' was issued in August as a spiral-bound document.

Earlier plans to issue the register on a searchable CD-ROM were deferred due to problems in indexing the electronic records. The project has not, however, been abandoned as the growth in membership numbers leads to an increase both in the number of pages of the register plus the number of copies that need to be produced. Moving to an electronic format will also make it easier to issue more frequent updates.

Training

The user group is investigating the appointment of recommended training and support organisations who will offer expertise in areas that SquareSum considers to be external to the core DREAM package.

DREAM University

A report on the 1999 DREAM Summer University appears elsewhere in this issue. The response from delegates as to whether similar events should be held in the future was overwhelmingly positive.

Venues are being actively sought for 2000, 2001 and 2002 with Bath, Warwick, Loughborough, Reading, Brunel and Nottingham amongst the contenders.

Worcester meeting 14 October 1999

'The faithful city' is the venue for the next user group meeting on 14 October. The event is being hosted in H&WCCTE's (formerly HAWTEC) brand new conference facility, and entry is free-of-charge to members. If you have missed the meeting fliers and would like to come, please ring Irene Cullis on 01323 422051.

10.45	Welcome	Arthur Allen, H&WCCTE
10.50	User Group news	Tim Cullis, INFAR
11.00	Using recently developed UDI features to solve enhancement needs	Neil Savin and Sam Raven, SquareSum
11.45	Introduction to Crystal report writer	
12.00	Quality Processes	Kathy Turner, SquareSum
12.15	Support and HelpDesk software	Hazel Haas, SquareSum
12.30	Lunch	
1.30	SquareSum update	Richard Pierce, SquareSum
1.45	DREAM upcoming releases	SquareSum development team
2.15	Enhancement ballot results	Jonathan Allcock, TECSYS & Sejal Jobanputra, BAe
2.30	Enhancement response	Philip Taylor, SquareSum
3.00	Open Forum	Arthur Allen, H&WCCTE

Open Day

What's the point in having a country mansion if you don't make use of it?

SquareSum's new corporate headquarters at Follifoot Hall, Harrogate, was the venue for a very successful garden party at the end of July—local customers and suppliers joining staff and their families for a barbecue, croquet, archery and a wander through the grounds.



People News

The success DREAM has been enjoying in the educational sector has not gone unnoticed and **John Cole** joins the Uxbridge office sales team to strengthen the presence in this market.

In May, SquareSum purchased an initial licence of the Rational TeamTest software. This will automate a number of the tests currently undertaken manually on new software releases. The second phase of the investment is the appointment of **Simon Garnett** who joins the Harrogate development team as quality assurance controller. Simon will be using the Rational TeamTest software to help improve the quality and timeliness of DREAM software releases.



The development team is further strengthened with **Simon Adie** from Baan, whilst **Chris Ward** (son of John Ward) is a temporary recruit during his gap year.

It is planned to recruit and train additional consultants to handle the growing number of new installations and meet demand for consultancy from the installed base.

2000 on the web

Earlier this month, SquareSum issued Year 2000 guidance to all its customers. If you would like a copy, contact Hazel Haas at the Harrogate office, or take a look at SquareSum's updated Web Site.

A Design for a Bookkeeping System

Written ten years ago, this October 1989 paper established the design philosophies for Version 0.1 of the *'SquareSum Accounting System'*

A History Lesson

Our objective is to produce, and sell, the definitive accounting system for the 1990s. We consider that we have the knowledge and experience to do this. We also consider that most other systems are wrong. We are almost the only ones in step.

It is worth considering why our system is different from most of our competitors, indeed why there are a small number of, in our view, good systems with most of these tracing their ancestry back to conversations with our designers during the last twenty years.

In a nutshell our view is that from the inception of double entry bookkeeping to the 1960s—some 500 years—organisations grew faster than their ability to process accounting data. Systems were developed which used short cuts, variations, twists, turns, anything to try to enable a large organisation to keep something which more or less kept within the definition of Proper Books of Account. Since the late 1960s the improvements in computer technology have made it possible for even the largest organisation to keep proper books. Unfortunately most system designers have based their designs on the short cuts and workarounds which had become accepted practice. No one has thought out the requirements from first principles and tried to apply the power of the computer to the needs of the business and the rules of bookkeeping.

Our aim is to cut through the restrictions of the last 500 years and produce a bookkeeping system which uses the power of the computer to produce proper books.

Design-First Pass

The object of a bookkeeping system is to record financial events in books and produce control information in a business. The key feature of modern bookkeeping, that is the variety used for the last 500 years, is double entry. Double entry means that every transaction is looked at from two points of view, one account gains (is debited), while another account loses (is credited). Double entry allows us to buy and sell on credit, to produce management information and to 'prove' the accuracy of the books by showing that the debits and credits sum to equal totals.

It is sometimes suggested that the equality of debits and credits, expressed for every debit there is a credit, means that each value has a gain and loss account. That is one transaction value two account codes. This idea is wrong and, where it has been used, can cause serious problems (the add to zero test does not help find incomplete sets of data). The correct rule is that, in any document, the sum of the debits equals the sum of the credits.

In modern bookkeeping systems based on machines it is customary to merge the debits and credits into one value and use positive values

for debits and negative values for credits. In this case the test of accuracy becomes 'that in any document the value sums to zero.' This idea is well established and works. It does produce some amusing confusion amongst accountants—Sales and Profits being credits are shown as minus values and minus is generally considered to be bad. Where totals are being kept, for example account balances, it may be useful to keep the total of debits and the total of credits rather than just the balance.

It is possible to devise an alternative, four sign bookkeeping system. This deals with the concept of 'undebits' not being credits and 'uncredits' not being debits. This idea is used in some of the better inventory systems where a return to supplier is not confused with issues and a return to stores is not confused with a receipt. While the idea has some advantages it is not generally accepted and will not be included in our system.

In this outline description of a bookkeeping system we have talked of documents and accounts. A document is a group of entries whose values sum to zero and an account is a heading to which a value is allocated. Our outline design will now describe these and this will complete our first pass at a bookkeeping system design.

Document

A document is a complete transaction in bookkeeping terms,

a series of book entries, values, summing to zero. Typical documents are Purchase Invoices, Purchase Credit Notes, Sales Invoices, Sales Credit Notes, Cheques, Journals. All of these, and many more, are different and in modern systems are processed differently. Typically they are entered, in English systems, into Day Books before being posted to Sales, Purchase and Nominal Ledgers.

In the beginning, and still in the official French Code Napoleon system all transactions are written into a Journal before being posted into a Ledger. This shows that in a proper bookkeeping system all documents are the same. They can all be input through one route. The invention of the Day Book was an English work round to overcome the problems of high volumes in manual systems. It was not possible to make all the entries into one Journal.

Note that 'Day Book' is the English for Journal. All we have done at this stage is to use multiple Journals to enable multiple clerks to enter data at the same time. The columnar Day Book is a further development designed to reduce the volume of posting to the ledgers by adding columns and posting totals to the ledger rather than individual document values. It sharply reduces the number of entries posted but means that details of a ledger entry can only be found in the day book.

In our system we will return to the one Journal idea, making use of the power of the computer to take the work from many clerks and format them into one 'book.' We will also use the common Journal format rather than the complexities of multiple formats beloved by other designers.

Each Document has a date. In modern bookkeeping it also has some form of number or identification. Normally this is taken from, or sometimes copied

onto, the physical document which is being recorded. This number forms the reference to the physical document and allows us to identify the source of the data.

The document consists of a series of values, lines or entries. Each of these consists of the account number to which the entry is allocated and a value. It may also have some short description. The object of the description is to enable the humans to understand the reason for the entry without having to refer to the original document. In general less than one entry in ten requires a description (nine out of ten are obvious eg Goods). Another feature of old systems rarely seen in modern ones is an optional description for the whole document. This feature allows the clerk to write a paragraph explaining the reason for the document as a whole. It is required on only a small percentage of documents but is very useful in these cases.

A document may have no entries. It may merely be used to record the usage of a document number. It may have only one entry, but that would have to have a zero value. Normally it will have between two and ten entries though there is no upper limit in the theory. A document may have as many entries, or lines, as the clerk or accountant wishes. In many cases a house rule sets the upper limit at about 30 though most companies have documents with more entries and some running into thousands have been seen. A document filing system could be optimised for documents of less than 20 entries, while allowing for very large documents.

Account

An account is a heading to which an entry is allocated. In the original bookkeeping system these were set out in a book, a Ledger. Entries from a Journal were *posted* into the Ledger by being written

onto the page to which they were allocated. From time to time, perhaps monthly, the debit and credit columns on a page would be added up. The difference between them forms the *Balance* of account. It would be written onto the lower totalled side so that the values of the two columns were equal, they would be ruled off and the Balance carried down to start a new section of the account.

From time to time all the accounts would be 'balanced' at one time and a list made of the balances of the various accounts. This list would be added up to test, or try, the balances to see if the debit balances equalled the credit balances, or in modern terms sum to zero. This trial is generally known as a Trial Balance.

An account consists of its identifier and a title. The identifier is a number, code, or short name. Originally this was the page number of the Ledger. The title is the name of the account.

The basic rules of bookkeeping require nothing else. It is now

Early directions

This historical document was produced before coding of the pilot system started and even predates the use of DREAM as the system name.

Today it seems quite logical to have chosen a client/server architecture using Windows clients and SQL database server; ten years ago the best way forward was not at all clear. A committee of industry 'gurus' with skillsets in PCs, Macs, NetWare, SQL, UNIX, networking and so forth, met several times in 1988 and 1989 to discuss and suggest development routes. Topics included, 'Will support for the emerging client/server architecture continue?' and 'Which is the best client, the elegant Mac or the rather basic PC/Windows.'

Also, 'Will PC servers be powerful enough to run an SQL database?' Alternatively, 'Should the system be developed for UNIX?' (at that time fast growing in popularity) And 'Is there a reliable SQL database that could be used for development?'

customary to keep a current balance or total with the identifier and name but this only exists to eliminate the need to sum the various entries attached to the account to find its balance and, perhaps, to give us a method of checking to see if the account balance and sum of entries agree.

It will be noted that we have talked of Accounts, not of Purchase Accounts, Sales Accounts, Nominal (or General) accounts. In strict theory we only need one Ledger, a book containing all the accounts. As organisations grew and had more than one clerk it became useful to have three separate ledger books. One containing the accounts of suppliers, one the accounts of customers and one the general business accounts. In some parts of the world only one office dealt with outsiders so they had one outsiders (third party) ledger rather than separate Purchase and Sales Ledgers. An obvious difference between the outsiders ledger(s) and the internal ledger is that it useful to note the address of the outsiders. There are requirements for different types of master file data for the different types of accounts. In England the development of the additional ledgers and day books lead to the main Journal and Nominal Ledger holding smaller volumes of entries and more confidential information. The Nominal, or General, Ledger became known as the 'Private Ledger' and was kept in a safe place with the 'Private Journal.'

Modern bookkeeping has developed the idea of one Nominal Ledger account holding the balance of all the Purchase Ledger accounts and another the balance of all the Sales Ledger accounts. These are known as Control Accounts. The purpose of the control account is to deal with problems caused by increases in volume. When the clerks wished to take out a Trial Balance they had to add up all the accounts and prove the total was

zero. Frequently, indeed normally, it was not zero at the first attempt. Work had to stop while the error was located. By introducing a Control Account in the Nominal Ledger we have the position where the Nominal could be balanced to zero without needing to look at the Sales or Purchase ledgers and where the individual Sales or Purchase accounts could be added up and the total agreed to the Control Account without the whole set of books being balanced.

The Control Account is not part of the double entry, it cannot be because it duplicates the values in the individual accounts, it is just a device to ease the problems of balancing the books.

Its only usefulness in a modern system is, like keeping a balance on a Nominal Ledger Account, that it prevents the need to add up numerous figures to obtain a total.

Conclusion-First Pass

In the above notes we have fully described a basic bookkeeping system without any of the many complexities of most accounting systems. The key features are:-

All documents follow the same fundamental rules. While we may, later, decide there are differences between Invoices, Cheques and 'Journal' documents these differences will be limitations of the functionality described here, not additions.

An account is an account, it is whatever an accountant wants to have as an account. One account is the same as any other account. We may decide later that we wish to carry out special processes on some account and keep some special master file data. This does not change the basic rule that all accounts are, from the bookkeeping theory point of view, the same.

Design-Second Pass

It is now time to extend our first, theoretical, design and produce a

basic working design for a modern computer system. As before we will work with the two elements of our system, Documents and Accounts.

Documents Revisited

We said that documents have two heading fields, date and number (or Identifier). In English bookkeeping practice the date used for a document is the date written on the document. We try to date our Sales documents and our Journals with the correct date for the entry. The date when we should have produced the document rather than today's date. A purchase document typically originated from a supplier and has whatever date he used.

This gives us some problems. If we are trying to, say, produce accounts for the month of January we may not have all the January items entered when it is time to produce the accounts. Further there may be some December, or even earlier, items which were entered after the December accounts were prepared.

In old systems the clerks ruled off the accounts and took out a balance. When the trial balance balanced the accounts were prepared. It was easy to see which documents were in, or out, of the totals for any month. In modern systems it is not so easy. The easiest way to deal with this is to add to the date a second date, the month to which the document is assigned for accounting purposes. Of course, not every organisation uses months so this becomes the period.

The period is part of the header data for a document because all the entries on a document must go to one period. A document sums to zero. A period must sum to zero (if it didn't the books would not balance for that period). A document can only go to one period.

The French have a slightly different method. They use the

date d'écriture—date of writing—as the date. This is not, as it first seems, the date when the entry is actually written (the input date) but the date when it should have been written, rather like the English method of dating Journal entries. For monthly accounting purposes the French can use the month of the date. Periods are still required for accounting in anything except months. A second date would be useful to carry the true date of, for example, a purchase invoice in addition to the writing date. The Italians have a need for even more dates to meet the legal requirements for controlling the bookkeeping process by time stamping documents at various points through the accounting system. The English may find it useful to record a further date on supplier and customer accounts, the date of payment. The Americans will need, and the English may like, to know the due date of payment.

Dates will be held in the computer in only one format. This may be *yyyymmdd* or *yyyjjj* (day number within year). For output, display or printing many formats are needed. The order may be *dmy* or *mdy* with the month as numeric, short alpha or full alpha. The delimiter between the parts of the date may be a space, dot slash or anything else. Leading zeros may be suppressed on the day and month number.

When entering a date we expect the input to be numeric in either *dmy* or *mdy* order. The date may be input as an unpunctuated string of six or eight digits, 010190 or 01011990 or may be punctuated, 01.01.90 or 01.01.1990. When punctuation is used the leading zeros could be suppressed, 1.1.90 or 1.1.1990. Frequently the same, or a similar, date will apply to a series of documents. It is useful to reduce the work load by allowing the date to be input at the start of a batch and copies, with changes, to

each new document. A variation on this, which is very helpful, is to allow the batch date to be 'partial.' The right hand end of the date only. In this case only the partial date is copied from document to document and only changes in this part are carried forward. The user does, of course, have to complete the partial date for each document to make up an acceptable date.

The first test of an acceptable date is that it is a valid calendar date. A second test is that it is not further in the future or the past than a parameterised range. A typical test may not be more than 0 days in the future or 180 days in the past. This second, range, test is a warning and request for confirmation only.

The accounting period number allocated to a document will contain the financial year number, *yyyy*, and a period number *pp*. While most financial years have only 12 periods the system will allow for 96 so that documents can be allocated well into the future without any problems.

The document number or identifier is the file reference used in our own organisation for filing the original document. It will normally be enough to have a 7 or 8 digit number although some organisations like to be able to deal with alpha prefixes or suffixes to a number. It is also useful to divide documents into types or classes and allocate some document type identifier. This can be used to validate some data about the document to a master file record and automatically provide names or short names for the class of document in our reports.

Each line or entry from a document will have a value. This value is the official value for the bookkeeping system and is used to prove the zero sum on the document and in the whole set of books. It must be in the currency of the books. Individual documents may be in other

currencies and it will be necessary to retain the values in these other currencies. The full requirement for a comprehensive currency system is discussed later in a separate document. At this point it is enough to say that we must be able to record more than one value on each entry and that each currency must be displayed and printed with the correct number of digits after the decimal and the correct punctuation.

The size of the value field needs to be considered as does, the larger, size of a total field for any account balances or reporting totals. In the English banking system a maximum size of eleven digits of pence, that is 999 million pound, was established in 1959. Today perhaps 12 digits would be a more reasonable maximum with a possible need for 13 or even 14 in some currencies (Hewlett-Packard's turnover, to the cent, requires 13 digits though it never exists as one figure outside the highly summarised group reports).

Initial versions and early adopters

SquareSum's first development PC, a 20-MHz 386, was purchased in September 1988. An Apple Mac was also purchased for investigation into user interfaces.

Ian Clegg joined SquareSum in January 1989 and carried out exploratory development work in C under Windows. After some problems trying to get an early version of C++ to work, the December 1989 pilot version was eventually developed in C using Gupta SQLBase as the database engine. This was followed in 1990 by an alpha release which was implemented by Guylin and INFAR.

The first beta sites in 1991 and early 1992 were IMX, Mondas and Charles Church. Allied Steel and Wire were the first post-v1.0 user (v1.2.2) in December 1992, followed in 1993 by Disc Europe, Entrix, Harrison Drape and Timpsons.

So far as the internal computer storage is concerned a larger number is not a significant cost. It is however a very significant disadvantage on paper where unneeded white space in wide value columns causes problems. We may need, in future versions, to allow the user to set a maximum value size and use this to fix the width of columns.

The method of representing numbers in the computer may cause problems. If we use 'real numbers' which are an approximation of a decimal number then adding a large number of values together can result in the total converting to the wrong decimal value. The books no longer 'sum' to zero because of an error in the accuracy of the numbers. We have said that 'to an accountant there is nothing less real than a real number.'

An additional field is required to mark the status of an entry.

Accounts revisited

We have said that an account is an account and that all accounts are the same. We have also said that the only data required on the account master file for the basic system is the identifier and a name.

It may be useful to keep a running balance with the account data to eliminate the need to add

up the entries every time the current total is required.

In any real system it is necessary to be able to deal with supplier, customer and general accounts. While any of the routines for these accounts should work with any of the other accounts it is useful to be able to separate them when required. This could be done by allocating separate ranges of identifiers to the different accounts however it seems better to add some type indicator to the master record.

Another type indicator is required to specify whether accounts are allocated to the Balance Sheet or are Trading Accounts. Different actions are required on these two types of account at the end of a financial year.

On document entries we talked of a status indicator. It is useful to be able to specify the initial status of an entry on an account. This enables us to control special operations on accounts.

It is necessary to be able to specify a secondary currency on an account. A general account may be, for example, a bank account in some other currency. A supplier or customer account may be in some special currency. The mark is required to ensure that the clerk provides the correct information when entering data to the account.

The European VAT system may need some mark, of the normal VAT rate for transactions posted to this account, to enable the system to validate the VAT on documents and correctly allocate turnover. While this is not currently required in the UK it is, in theory, required in some other European countries.

Conclusion-Second Pass

We have added a few new ideas and fields to the basic system defined in the first pass. This gives us a full, if simple, specification of a bookkeeping and accounting system. As defined the system is workable.

We have not defined different ledgers, different data input systems, day book systems, cash book systems or any of the many complications found in other accounting systems. We have said that we may introduce special processing options for different types of document but these are restrictions designed to ease the clerk's work load by making the system complete the full document data from preset rules.

Our system is a fully featured bookkeeping system following the rules of bookkeeping theory and able to be used by accountants to record their data.

What Next

While the above, second pass, is a full system it is a basic system. In the further documents we will outline the sub systems required to operate and control this basic bookkeeping system.

The additions include operator security and recovery techniques, help, extensive master file support to aid and guide the clerk, a wide range of bookkeeping reporting options, a wide range of accounting reporting options, payment and collection systems and information management systems and many features designed to enable the user to find the data required easily, to process it once and have the system 'remember' the actions.

Version 0.1

Version 0.1 of the SquareSum Accounting System will be produced as an initial test vehicle. It will be used as a live system by SquareSum and the databases set up will be converted, as necessary, to future versions.

While this version will not be sold it does establish the heart of the system and the basic rules and principles for our future development.

*Philip Taylor
October 1989*

First enhancements

The coding of the system hadn't even started when the first enhancement suggestions arrived

- ability to allocate nominal items (similar to purchase/sales accounts) so that, for example, a net pay control could be reconciled.
- if a short date is entered, take the rest by default, for example, 8 or 08 becomes 8 November 1989.
- ability at the input stage to allocate transactions over several periods—rent, phone bill, etc.

The first enhancement formed part of the alpha version, while the last is now achievable through UDIs.

Some Education Needed!

It's quite common for users to request system enhancements for features that already exist; a case of—as SquareSum puts it—“Some Education Needed!” This article looks at some of these plus enhancements coming in future versions of DREAM.

Drill-down filter

This enhancement request was removed from the ballot, however the User Group committee now feels it should have gone forward.

- If you drill down from a document to a large account like our bank account which has thousands of transactions, it brings up the total report detail instead of say just the month that the particular item was entered in. We would like to be able to filter these.

SquareSum: The drill-down is for the range you selected in the first place. If you start with a typical Document Report without any period setting then drilling down to a Nominal will show the entire history. If you qualify the Document report with a period, or range of periods, then the drill down is restricted to those periods.

Submitter: The SquareSum work-round doesn't address the issue adequately. Report functionality allows a lot of filters to be applied to data being requested. Drill-down allows none. As a user, I don't want to go back to the original Doc Report to define my drill-down requirements. Surely, as with PayList, the report box could be activated by a drill-down request? Default parameters (showing what drill-down would provide now) could be pre-populated so a user that did not want anything different could simply click OK. I know this is a widespread concern—I discussed with Ian and he agreed it was a good idea.

Posting and allocating cash

Three enhancement requests were received about posting and allocating cash.

- We would like to be able to post and allocate cash at the same time. We post a lot of SL receipts and it is inconvenient to have to go into each sales ledger account to allocate receipts. This could be implemented by the sales ledger account displayed immediately after posting a receipt.

- Currently when automatically allocating payments or receipts you need to have available the unique system generated number. This means either having a copy of the statement or a second window open to give you the number. This is time consuming and messing. We would like the ability on the UDI to view all open items on an account and be able to select the item from that list we wish to allocate the payment against.

- The most popular request / 'missing functionality' involves the processing and allocation of cash receipts. It would be useful to be able to receive one cheque that may cover more than one invoice and do automatic allocation without the need to run more one window as at present. SQS has a UDI that allows one cheque matched to one invoice to be carry out allocation but no more. If this could be modified to allow drill down from the input screen and then be able to select the appropriate invoices for matching this would be an improvement.

SquareSum: DREAM provides two methods of allocating within Input. The first, as indicated above, relies on the payment being for one document and requires the input clerk to quote the document type and number being paid. The second option, showing all the open items as requested above, is invoked by using the 'Prepare Allocation' function on the receipt document. This was added in v2.6.

Payment history report

We would very much like to be able to produce a payment history report, showing all invoices etc on a customer account and the date that they were paid (or payments and the dates of the invoices being paid). This would allow easy and fast access to a customer's payment record. Often, rebates are payable based on a satisfactory payment record, and to be able to quickly produce evidence of this would be a boon. We could then export this to Excel for analysis.

This could be a logical extension to the Allocation Report, selecting multiple documents of a type (e.g. Cheque Received) and the items allocated to them, very much like a Document Report in format.

SquareSum: At present it is possible to have a Nominal Detail Report of one or more Purchase Ledger Accounts for one document type, presumably Purchase Invoices in this case. You can then show the High Date column. This is the latest date in the allocation and, in normal circumstances will

be the cheque date. If there is more than one 'invoices' document type this approach will only work if you select one document type at a time or just report on all document types including the cheques. It is also possible to show the Allocation Number column and sort into this order.

More saved settings options

The idea of 'saving settings' for a nominal detail report is very useful. This could be enhanced to include the 'all items' or 'open items' setting as well. When we flick from a recent 'all items' search to a saved 'open items' search, the NDR includes all items not just open ones.

SquareSum: The saved settings do include open items and all items. We use this feature regularly. There are a number of settings that could usefully be added to saved reports. We are slowly adding the ones that we think would be useful. Specific enhancement requests supported by users would help direct our efforts.

Audit of account modifications

Two enhancement requests were received in this area.

- We would like an audit report of additions and changes to accounts (suppliers, customers). In our case, we are loading these from an external system but the requirement would be the same if they were entered manually. I have written an audit report for transactions by selecting on input date, but apparently there is no such date attached to accounts records.

- When new accounts are created or existing accounts maintained or changed you cannot tell which user has done what. We would like to have auditing of changes/creation of accounts and details etc.

SquareSum: This was in last years enhancement list and is planned for version 2.8 or 2.9. It should be released in the first half of 2000.

Automated scheduling of audit

We can have users wishing to use the system 7 days a week from 7:30am to 10pm. As Audit has to be run manually, this results in audit being run less frequently than desirable. We would like to be able to schedule Audit to be run overnight.

SquareSum: This feature is included in DREAM v2.7.0

Importing

Recently we wanted to bulk delete bank details from the creditor accounts so that we could do a mass import of new bank details as we are switching from a manual cheque system of payment to BACS for all creditors in the very near future. This deletion currently has to be done using SQL statements but could effectively be shortcut through the interface program.

SquareSum: Release 2.7.0 supports importing changes and has an action to add if empty, change if not.

When will we be able to import indices?

SquareSum: This has been added in version 2.7.0

Restructure and reduce file sizes

Each week our operations email copies of their DREAM database to Head Office. The largest is currently 19 MB and the file sizes are constantly growing larger. We would like an archiving facility so that the size of the operational database can be reduced.

SquareSum: Archiving, as discussed at previous User Group meetings is planned for 2.8 which is expected early 2000.

Improved manuals

The existing manual is a rather technical explanation of how to use DREAM features rather than showing how to use DREAM to handle typical tasks. Suggestions on implementation: split the manual into several separate documents, for example:

Features Overview—High-level view for senior personnel.

Implementation RoadMap—What steps have to be taken, what decisions made?


Housekeeping—Backup, routine maintenance, how to roll out new versions, some coverage of databases.

Interfacing External Systems—Importing, DLLs, Office 2000, etc.

System Reference—Task-oriented step-by-step account of how to do things.

Online Help—could work via links to Adobe Acrobat PDF files of the manuals.

SquareSum: Apart from a re-write of the manual, currently under way, we would like to add some 'How to' training courses to the CD. This is a very large step forward and is taking a long time. The present training courses and DREAM University have given us help in designing CD-based training for the future.



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DREAM Summer University

Pictures from the 'Class of 99'

by Alexandra Cullis

THE FIRST-EVER DREAM

Summer University was held from Wednesday June 30th to Friday July 2nd in Nottingham University's lush rolling campus just outside the city centre. Nottingham's Social Sciences Department was the location for the sessions, just a stone's throw from the Cripps and Hugh Stewart Halls of Residence where the delegates were accommodated. Simultaneous sessions ran in three lecture theatres, and a 'hands on' computer workshop was open all day where the users could practice new DREAM features with SquareSum consultants on hand to advise.

When organising the conference, it was predicted that some 50 users would attend. However, booking forms flooded in and were still arriving two days before the conference was due to start. The final number of delegates, speakers and support personnel reached 108, considerably more than expected.



Fortunately for the User Group, Nottingham University had a last minute conference cancellation, which released extra bedrooms and enabled the sessions to be held in larger theatres.

The conference and first session began with a welcome from Richard Pierce, SquareSum's director of marketing. He continued with an update of SquareSum's progress—both in the rapidly expanding customer base and the industry awards that DREAM and SquareSum continue to collect. The audience was then given a complete system overview of the latest version of DREAM and its new features. Halfway through his presentation, Richard offered the audience free drinks if he managed to finish before lunchtime. As it hadn't been anticipated delegates would drink at lunchtime (!) the bar was closed. Peace reigned when the bar manager was dragged from his lunch to unlock the door and serve the thirsty hoards.

That evening, coaches transported the delegates to the





Nottingham caves: a medieval version of quoits (left) and a view of the tannery (right)



city centre for a visit to the subterranean world of the Nottingham Caves—a unique set of hand-carved sandstone caves dating from the 13th century. These were almost lost forever when a modern shopping mall was built, but thanks to local pressure groups, the caves were saved. Consequently delegates were bemused and amused in turn to find the entrance to these historic caves tucked between Boots and Millie's Cookie Store in the middle of the indoor mall.

On Thursday evening, SquareSum hosted pre-dinner drinks in the elegant Cripps Hall library. A formal dinner followed with Roy Walker, host of

television's 'Catchphrase', as after dinner speaker. Roy's gentle Irish humour and good natured ribbing of accountants in general was much appreciated.

So was the first DREAM Summer University a success? The returned critique forms were closely analysed after the conference ended. All delegates found most sessions valuable, but they admitted concentration levels were stretched to cope with up to five one-and-a-half hour sessions a day. A frequent suggestion was for shorter sessions but more of them. More free time was requested between sessions for phone calls/networking/coffee. And more than one person thought that the

Summer University could easily run to a week. 'Themed days to delve deeper' or 'in-depth tutorials' were requested. The UDI sessions were criticised for starting at too high a level. Some delegates would have liked the opportunity to attend all sessions without any overlap of topics. And it was noted that end-users should be encouraged to give presentations of real-life experiences using DREAM.

But users also learnt that DREAM could be used in many more ways than previously realised. "I'm just appalled at how little we use the system and how much we could be doing" one person wrote—this was a view shared by many others.



Roy Walker in action (right) and the contented audience (above)





There were plenty of good ideas for future conferences. A few delegates would have liked prior knowledge of the content of the sessions, to enable them to decide which were relevant for their particular application of DREAM. Some topics were too advanced for all attendees and it was suggested that the sessions be split into intermediate and advanced levels. One comment said users would have had more opportunity to network had they been given a list of delegates at registration. Better-planned 'Birds-of-a-Feather' meetings were requested for members of companies in the same industry.

Most enjoyed the convenience of an easily accessible university venue with the benefits of easy parking and the whole conference being held on-site. However, some felt the accommodation was rather basic and somewhat lacking in the

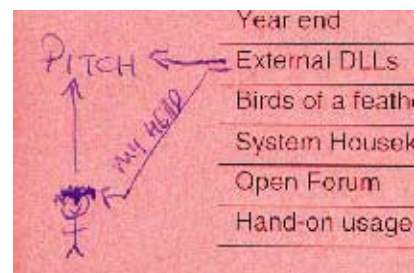
usual comforts; others enjoyed the nostalgia of university accommodation. All attendees found the sessions extremely informative and helpful. 95 percent said they would definitely recommend new users to attend and 98 percent thought the overall format of the event was good or excellent. The evening entertainment was thoroughly enjoyed, as was the general opportunity to mix with other people of the similar work background. Most surprising of all, many expect to return to next year's conference as part of an ongoing familiarisation of DREAM and new features.

In conclusion, the DREAM Summer University was a resounding success. Some final comments made heady reading for those involved in the conference organisation—*"Interesting and informative"* *"Very useful, and*

more importantly, very enjoyable" *"A wonderful summer school"* *"Essential for new users and new joiners to companies using DREAM"* *"Everything went like clockwork"* *"Enjoyed time here. Worthwhile."*

All points raised in the critiques have been taken into consideration for next year's DREAM Summer University—venues are being appraised as this issue of The Journal goes to press.

Alexandra Cullis



Graphical feedback courtesy of Mark Hancock, Marks & Clerk



Peppers Cable Glands

Extending the use of DREAM to mission-critical operations

PEPPERS CABLE GLANDS of Camberley, Surrey, evolved from a wartime manufacturer of lorry spares and general jobbing engineering, and is now as part of the Currie & Warner Group, a leading manufacturer of cable glands to a world-wide customer base. The company sells directly into 25 countries, and indirectly to another 25 or so destinations, both through agents and distributors, and directly to OEMs and international major project contractors.

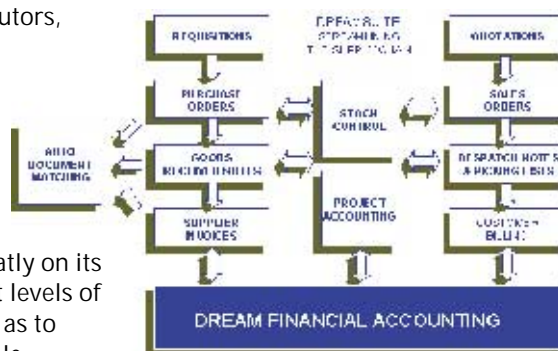
Because cable glands are often very similar from one supplier to the next, Peppers' competitiveness depends greatly on its ability to provide excellent levels of customers service, as well as to work to the tightest possible margins. Key to these requirements is an effective sales and purchase order processing and stock control system as well as software which will enable the assembly of the company's 2,500 components into a finished product.

Since 1989 Peppers had been using an IBM System/36 computer with software supplied through an IBM agent. With the lease on that system due to expire and doubts over its year 2000 compliance, managing director John Walton and his team, set about looking for a suitable replacement.

SquareSum's DREAM was one of the packages to make it on to Peppers' short-list, after John Walton had read a review of the software in the KPMG Software Directory. John Walton: "DREAM immediately seemed like an ideal accounting solution—just what we were looking for to control finance. However DREAM did lack functionality in the key areas of

importance to us, such as order processing and stock control, as well as some simple manufacturing capabilities."

What catapulted DREAM to the top of the company's short-list was an introduction to Get Real Systems of York, the developers of the DreamSuite application that is designed to complement DREAM.



DreamSuite offered Peppers a means of extending DREAM to all the mission-critical areas, such as purchasing, sales and stock. Whilst the DreamSuite system did not offer the required manufacturing capabilities, Get Real's willingness to work with Peppers to develop this functionality convinced John Walton that the DREAM/DreamSuite option would be the most suitable.

The DREAM/DreamSuite solution had several attractions for Walton and his team: both systems are true Windows applications and integrate fully with Microsoft Office 97; they are largely hardware independent so there is little risk of them becoming obsolete due to changes in technology; they share the same common database and the 'unified ledger' principle; and they are document based, which meant an end to traditional batch controls.

After a surprisingly short and trouble-free implementation period (Peppers had originally expected to have to run the new system in parallel with the IBM for some time) the company went live with DREAM and DreamSuite at the beginning of 1999. Get Real had even completed the development of the special Works Orders options for Peppers, which had been incorporated into the standard package to ensure ongoing support and enhancement.

Now, some months after the introduction of the new system at Peppers John Walton is delighted with the results: "Even on visual inspection the results are plain to see. The accounts department desks are clear every night, there are no more manual batch controls, and nothing is lying around waiting to be processed."

Furthermore, says Walton, "Our stock control is bang up to date, whereas it used to be a day's work each month. Because of DreamSuite we have definitely gained in overall efficiency. We haven't made any redundancies as a result, but we have dramatically increased the productivity of everyone involved. The system has given us great flexibility too. Although we are not totally paperless yet, we are well on the way."

As for Peppers' partnership with Get Real Systems, Walton is equally delighted: "Get Real is the first software company I have spoken to that appreciates that you don't buy software for its own sake. They have people with a rounded, wider business experience; people that understand business systems, not just computer systems". The result, says Walton, is that "DreamSuite is exactly what you would have if you could design it yourself".

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