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LSG Hours for the Holidays



Be sure to check your forms stock and order before Dec. 15th if you think you will need them in early January.

We will be closed for the **Thanksgiving Holiday** November 27th and 28th, 2003.

We will be closed for the **Christmas & New Year Holiday** starting Noon on December 24th, and will reopen at 8 A.M., January 5th, 2004.

Because the office will be closed during that time, paper and other products will not be shipped and only "emergency support" will be offered. **Please remember that "emergency support" is not covered under any pre-paid phone plans and is available by credit card only.** ■

Important Year-End Procedures

The end of the year is nearly upon us and that means it will soon be time to reset year to date totals to zero. **The time to perform this function is in January (after you have closed December, but before closing January).** The following describes how;

DOS Users: Start at the Main Menu and select 3 for Maintenance Menu. Next, select 3 to "Reset YTD totals to 0." Finally, answer "Y" to set the totals to zero.

Lab Manager for Windows Users: Start at the Main Menu and click on "Utility Menu." At the Utility Menu, click on "Year End." Finally, click on "Reset Year to Date Totals." ■

December 2003

Connections

Happy Holidays from all of us at LSG!

The Newsletter for Lab Manager Users



Letter from the President

Living and Working with Technology

Few people would argue that technology has made our lives easier and more productive. In our office, technology has made a huge difference in the way we conduct business. Computers, broadband internet access, sophisticated phone system, and fax machines have allowed us to do more in less time than has ever been possible before.

As wonderful as all of this technology is, there is a dark side and if we don't take steps to protect ourselves, the same technology that can bring life to a business can also take it away.

In August of 2003, millions of people in the Northeast and Midwest suddenly found themselves without power when their power grid failed. At about the same time, nearly 300,000 people were infected by the Blaster computer worm which affected Windows 2000, XP and NT systems. Computer networks and electrical grids are so complex that few people, if any, know exactly how all of the pieces work together. The same could be said about the Internet. Although they work reliably most of the time, they can suffer monumental failures as we have seen.

What can we do to protect ourselves?

Fortunately, there is a lot we can do to protect ourselves from being bitten by technology. Here at LSG we practice what we preach. For example, few people know that the LSG office is powered, on the most part, by solar power. All of our electrical needs, with the exception of air conditioning, are supplied by our very own 22,000 Watt solar array on the roof. With a very large battery array, we are able to conduct business day or night without any outside power. Since the phone company also uses backup power, we can conduct business as usual even during a complete black-out.

Now I understand that installing a large solar power generating system is not possible for the majority of businesses, there are a lot of simple solutions that cost little or no money to protect you from power problems. Start by installing a simple \$5.00 surge protector to protect your computer from harmful power spikes. Or, invest \$50.00 to \$100.00 in a UPS (Uninterruptible Power Supply). A UPS is a device that contains a large battery, charger, and power inverter that you plug into a regular power outlet. Your computer plugs into the back of the UPS. The built-in charger keeps the battery charged and when your office loses power, the UPS automatically starts supplying power to your computer for

as long as the battery inside the UPS is able. These devices come in a variety of sizes. A small UPS can supply power to a computer for about 10 minutes; enough time for you to gracefully finish what you are doing and power down the computer. A large UPS can power a computer for a much longer period of time.

I strongly recommend that all computer users invest in a UPS device. These units not only protect your computers from damage due to spikes and power fluctuations, they also help protect your precious data because when a computer loses power while you are accessing your data, there is always a chance your data could be damaged.

Back up your data



In addition to using a UPS, all computer users MUST backup important data on a daily basis. There is no substitute for this simple process. Backing up to a tape drive is better than nothing, but I recommend that you back up your data, every day, to a Zip drive or a CD-RW drive. My first choice are Zip drives because they are faster, easier to use, and more reliable than CD-RW drives. If you back up your data every working day, and rotate your disks, then the worst thing that could happen is the loss of one days worth of work. *For more on backing up, read the article on the next page.*

Perhaps it is the Boy Scout in me and the desire to always be prepared that makes me add the following.

Make sure you have flash lights available with a stash of fresh batteries. I have one of those new white LED flashlights. The one I have will work for about a month non-stop on one set of batteries. A few gallons of water and a few days worth of food are always a good idea too.



Protect yourself from Computer Viruses

Now days, every computer user should purchase and install virus protection software and keep it updated weekly. In our office, we use the McAfee product on each of our workstations to protect us from viruses along with a firewall computer running Linux between us and the Internet to protect us from computer hackers.

Our Linux server also filters out all viruses it finds in emails going in or out of the office. In this way we have two levels of protection against getting a virus. It also protects our clients from getting a virus from us.

If you can't afford to use a dedicated computer or firewall hardware, then consider using inexpensive firewall software on your computer. These programs do a great job of stopping hackers from breaking into your computer and stealing important data or damaging your computer.

ZoneAlarm has a free firewall program at www.zonelabs.com or you can use the less competent firewall software built into Windows XP. To enable it, click Start>Control Panel. Double-click Network Connections. Right-click your network connection and click Properties. Select the Advanced tab. Check the box that starts, "Protect my computer..."

Finally, keep your software up-to-date. The 300,000 Windows users that were affected by the Blaster worm could have avoided the problem if they had only kept their copy of Windows up to date. ■

across the top of the data entry screen. The tabs are used to make it easy to switch between multiple screens or tasks. For example, lets say you are entering a case and the phone rings and it is a doctor who wants to know what his balance is. With Lab Manager's new multi-tasking features, you would simply move the mouse up to the top of the screen and choose View, Account Information. As soon as you open the account screen, a tab is added to the top of the screen showing that you have a case open and the account entry screen open. You can open as many tasks or screens as you like and each one will be represented by it's own tab. Moving from one task to another is as simple as clicking on the desired tab.

When Can I Get It?

We continue to receive many calls asking when Lab Manager Version 6 will be available. The answer is, and at this point it is only our best guess, in the spring of 2004. Beta testers will see the product as soon as December of 2003 or January of 2004. Then, we will start releasing the new product to larger and larger groups of customers. By the Spring, the flowers will be blooming and so will Lab Manager Version 6. ■

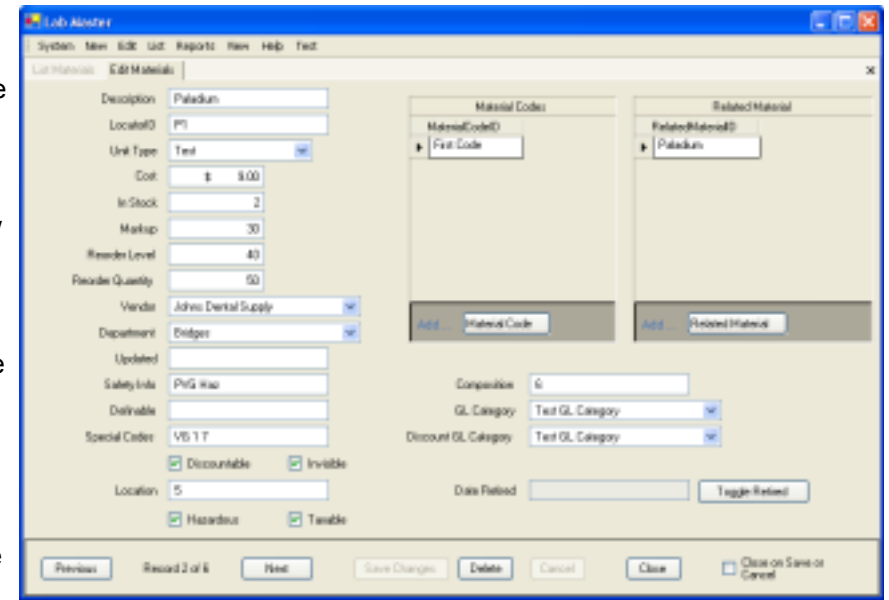


Figure 1

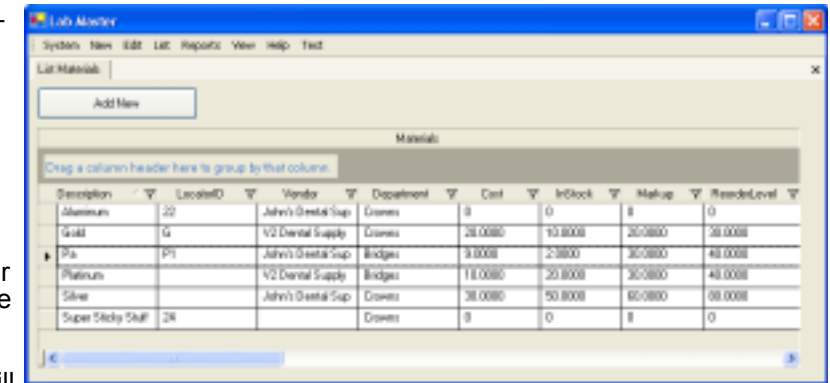


Figure 2

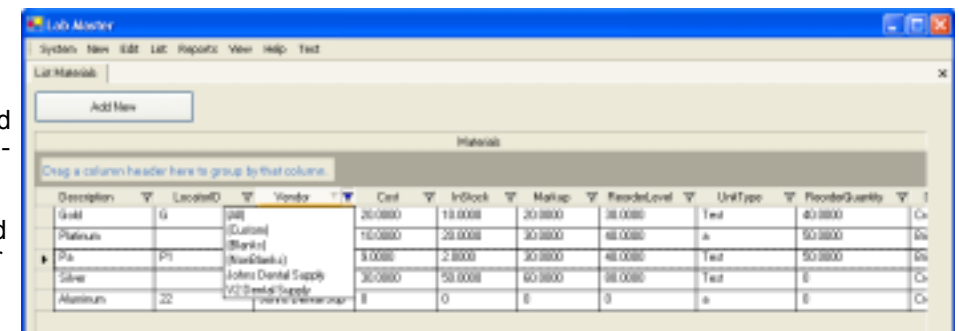


Figure 3

Merry Christmas

Happy Holidays



Lab Man Richard Janet Tom Rosalie Aaron Mandi Craig

off and hit the pavement running.

Since then, much progress has been made on Version 6. This new version will be the most powerful and comprehensive Lab Manager to date. Lab Manager Version 6;

- ▶ Is written in VB.net for improved speed and accuracy.
- ▶ Supports a new user interface that will be both easier to use and be multi-tasking at the same time. All of Lab Manager's functions and reports will be accessible from the drop-down-menus at the top of the screen and from the Outlook style shortcut bar located on the left side of the screen.
- ▶ Supports a faster, more powerful and reliable SQL database.
- ▶ Greatly improved multi-user support.
- ▶ Is fully integrated with a Reports Generator to allow the user to modify everything from labels to work tickets, invoice, statements, and all reports.
- ▶ Can be integrated with QuickBooks.
- ▶ Supports both Balance Forward and Open Item accounting.
- ▶ Improved security features.
- ▶ Supports an unlimited number of price lists.
- ▶ Supports new Tax Jurisdiction control and reporting. This new feature will allow you to accurately define City, State, County, and Federal Tax Jurisdictions so that Lab Manager can provide better tax reporting.
- ▶ New Patient Coding system that will allow you to categorize cases, production, and sales by Patient Codes.
- ▶ New Rich Text support for QC's and numerous message fields that allow the user to change the Font, Size, and Color of the text used.
- ▶ Support for 3 of the most common tooth numbering systems.
- ▶ New support for related products and materials. This features allows the user to tie one or more products together or to tie one or more materials together or tie materials to products. By connecting items together in this way, when a product or a material is added to a case, all of the items tied to it will also be added automatically. This

means that when you add a certain product to a case, other products and materials tied to it will also be added to the case along with it.

- ▶ Has many other new and improved features

Version 6 Data Entry Screens

At the time of this writing, most of the new data entry screen have been finished and are working great. These new screens will have many new and powerful features to make your life easier.

For example, many of the data entry screens will include a Quick Entry screen that will contain only the critical fields needed to create a new record of an account, case, product, material, vendor, etc. The Quick Entry screen will make it easier to add something new and helps by hiding most of the "stuff" you don't use.

Finding something in Lab Manager has also been improved. For example, to find a case, account, product, material, vendor, etc., we have added a new Quick Find table like the one show in **Figures 2 and 3**. This new Quick Find table can be used simply like the "Go To" box at the top of many of the Version 5 screens, or it can be used to help organize, sort, filter, or group your data in the table to make it easier to find one or a group of items. For example, if you want to update the tax rate for everyone in a certain city or area or tax jurisdiction, the Quick Find table can be **Sorted, Filtered, or Grouped** by any of the fields so that you see only those accounts that the new tax rate applies to. This new feature applies to nearly all of Lab Manager's data. Think of the possibilities. This will add a whole new dimension to finding cases.

Figure 3 shows how clicking on a column heading allows the user to easily change the way the table is sorted or filtered.

Figure 1 shows the new material entry screen. Notice that the screen is clean and not cluttered. Also notice the tabs running

Backing Up Your Data



I feel it is important to revisit the subject of backing up data because our support department has had a rash of support calls from clients that have lost all of their data due to a computer failure or theft. A simple daily backup would have prevented the loss of this precious data.

We recommend backing up to a **Zip drive** because they are inexpensive, fast, and dependable. Backing up to a **Zip drive** is not the only way you can backup your data. Some people backup to **CD-R's** and others backup to **tape**, however, from experience, we have found that these methods are not nearly as reliable or easy as backing up to a **Zip disk**.

When you consider the fact that this data represents your business, your livelihood, your income, it makes sense to guard and protect this data even if it means spending \$150.00 to \$200.00 to do so.

Use at least 5 different **Zip disks** and label them Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. Then, backup to the disk labeled Monday each Monday. Use the Tuesday disk on Tuesday and so on. It is also a good idea to use a 6th disk and back up to it each Friday evening and then take it home so that if there is a fire in the lab or a break-in, you don't lose your backups also.

Backing Up to Zip in Lab Manager

To backup to a **Zip disk** using Lab Manager's backup utility program, you will need to know what drive letter has been assigned to your **Zip drive**. It will usually be drive E:, however, it can be any letter D: or above. If you don't know what drive letter your **Zip drive** is, double click on the **My Computer** icon at the **Desktop**. Place a Zip disk into the Zip drive. Look at the drives in **My Computer** for a Zip drive or a Removable drive. Once you have found it, verify that it is the correct drive by double clicking on it with a Zip disk in the drive. If the drive lights up and it's contents are shown on the screen, then you have verified the drive letter.

Next, click on the **Start** button, move the mouse to **Programs** or **All Programs** and then to the **Lab Manager group** and then to **Lab Manager Utilities**. At the Lab Manager **Utilities Screen**, click on

Format, Backup, and Restore. At the next screen, you can modify the backup command. It is the one in the **white field** next to the word **Backup**. This line usually contains:

xcopy c:\LMWin32\LMData.mdb a:

Change the letter "a:" at the end of that line to "e:" or whatever drive letter represents your Zip drive. Make sure the letter is followed with the colon ":" and there should be a single space before the "e:".

The new Backup line should look like this;

xcopy c:\LMWin32\LMData.mdb e:

While you are here, it would be a good idea to modify the **Restore** command as well. If your Zip drive is drive "e:" then the restore command line should look like:

xcopy e:\LMData.mdb c:\LMWin32*.*

Now that the backup and restore commands have been defined, making a backup is as easy as inserting a Zip disk into the Zip drive and clicking on the **Backup Data** button in the **Lab Manager Utilities** program. ■

How to Speed Up Windows XP

The following describes how to make Lab Manager run faster in Windows XP. This does not apply to any other version of Windows.

1. Click on the **Start** button and then click on **Control Panel**.
2. Click on **Performance and Maintenance**. **NOTE:** If you can't see this selection, your computer might be set to **Classic View**. To change to **Category View**, click on **Switch to Category View** on the left.
3. Click on **Adjust Visual Effects**.
4. Click on the **Advanced** Tab.
5. Click on **Background services**, moving the dot next to it.
6. Click on **Apply** and close all of the windows you opened.

Restart your computer and it will operate Lab Manager many times faster. ■

Why do software companies like LSG charge for support?



A few years ago I had a lab owner complain to me about having to pay for telephone support. He went on to tell me that he never charges his doctors for calling him with questions and told me I should not charge for support either. To that I explained that he did not have thousands of accounts to support or the expense of full-time support personnel, computers, phone system, high-speed internet access, and office space dedicated to just one purpose; helping clients.

We could be like some of our competitors and hike up the price of our software to help cover the huge expense of support, but we don't. Further more, unlike one of our competitors who measures their support response time in days, we measure our support response time in seconds and minutes. We believe that when a person needs help, they don't want to wait two days for a support technician to call back with a solution. Our customers expect us to be available right then, and we are.

When one of our customers calls for help, 98% of the time, they reach one of our support technicians on the very first call during office hours. That record is way above the national average. How many times have you called Microsoft or any other software company for support and had to wait on the phone for over 30 minutes listening to a message telling you to "please hold and the next available technician will take your call?"

Recently, a friend told me he had to call Intuit about a problem he was having with QuickBooks. He waited on the phone for over 30 minutes just to talk to a technician and then was charged \$75 for the first 20 minutes. We don't charge that much and we give faster, better service. **We will also answer questions about many other products in addition to Lab Manager.**

That's a very important point. We try hard to be your single source for help related to your

computer, printer, and software. We regularly answer questions about computers, zip drives, CD-ROMs, email, printers, networking, QuickBooks, Quicken, and all of the Microsoft office products from Access to Word. Statistically, a very large number of the questions we answer every day have nothing to do with our Lab Manager programs.

If we don't know the answer to your question, we will be the first to tell you we don't know. However, our trained support technicians are experienced, friendly, and talented computer specialists who are readily available to answer your questions on a wide variety of computer and software related subjects.

Why No 800 Number for Support?

Many years ago, Tandy Corporation opened up a phone center to answer support questions about their new TRS-80 computers and software. They started with a toll number and about 25 technicians. All went well until they decided to change to a toll-free 800 number for support. Shortly after changing to the 800 number, the number of calls increased. To keep up with demand, Tandy added 25 more techs. It wasn't enough, so they added even more techs. Still not enough, so more techs were added. As Tandy was nearing 200 techs and still not keeping up with phone demand they rightfully concluded that when support is offered on an 800 number, customers make little to no effort to help themselves. Instead, they simply pick up the phone and call.

We have also concluded that because support costs are great, when it is done right, it is better to charge only those who use it. This means that for a very large number of Lab Manager users, there is absolutely NO ongoing support costs related to using Lab Manager. Unlike one of our competitors who charges it's customers monthly to use the software, we have customers who use our software and pay us nothing year after year after year to use the program. Once purchased, Lab Manager costs nothing to use.

The old adage, "you get what you pay for" ap-

plies to software support as well. If you want a company that you can trust to be there for you when you need help, we are the company for you. When you spend as much money as we do to provide timely, professional help, you either charge for your services, or go out of business. In the more than 20 years we have been providing software and support to the dental laboratory industry, we have seen several software companies come and go. In every case, the companies that tried to offer free support are now out of business. If you can still find a software company that provides free support, you can expect their support to be worth every penny you paid for it. ■

Technical Tips

Upgrading Your Computer?



Every year computers get faster, better, and cheaper. A combination seen in few other industries. Many are getting tired of their old computers and running out and buying a new system. If you are considering an upgrade soon,

please read the following.

DOS Users

If you are still using the DOS version of Lab Manager, take comfort in knowing that it works on most new computers just fine (if not much faster). We have tested the DOS version of Lab Manager on all current versions of Windows including XP and it works fine. In fact, the DOS version of Lab Manager, in some cases, works better in Windows XP than it did in earlier versions of Windows.

If you purchase a new computer with Windows XP on it, remember to first backup your programs and data onto a Zip drive or similar backup device (usually the entire LM folder and it's sub-folders) and restore the data to the new computer. Next, though not always necessary, re-install the your Lab Manager program from diskette. Make sure it is version 16.05.06. This is the only version guaranteed to work well past

the year 2000. If you have lost your diskette, you can order a replacement from LSG for a small shipping and handling fee.

Lab Manager 2000 Users

If you are using the Windows version of Lab Manager and you are thinking of buying a new computer, here are some things to remember.

Make sure the computer has no more than 512 Meg. of RAM. That's right. Lab Manager 2000 was written using Microsoft's Access 95. In those days, Windows did not support more than 512 Meg. of RAM therefore Lab Manager will not operate with more than 512 Meg of RAM in it.

Make sure the new computer has a Zip drive for making backups. We get calls every week to our support department from customers who lost their data when a computer failed, or a virus struck, or a computer was stolen. Don't make that mistake. Backup your data every day and take a copy of your data home often so that you won't lose it all if there is a fire or theft.

If offered a choice between Windows XP "Home" or "Professional", choose the "Home" version. Some users have reported speed problems using Lab Manager on the "Professional" version. Not everyone who uses the "Professional" version experiences the speed problems, only some, and we haven't figured out what is causing the problem in Windows yet. This speed problem should not be confused with the speed issue related to "Background Services" in Windows XP. The later problem can be corrected with just a few mouse clicks. If you have questions about Windows XP speed issues, contact our support department for details. ■



Lab Manager Version 6

In the last release of the Connection Newsletter, I explained the reasons why Version 6 has been delayed and I was happy to report that our new programmer, Craig, picked up where Kevin left