

Re: IF statement, I don't understand this

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If the values are in files then the files have to be maintained... and I've found that ensuring accurate routine file maintenance can be almost as difficult as ensuring routine program maintenance.

The particular cases under discussion were not 'routine' but were, for example, delivery methods and account characteristics. The sort of things that may appear to be fixed as part of the business methods at the time the programs are written, or may even be assured by management that they will never change, but then they do.

Doing this in a file takes but a few seconds and the user can do it themselves (with sufficient authority), and it can be reversed as quickly and easily. At least with my systems that is the case. In fact the 'decode file' (or table) can hold many small pieces of named information, the name of the field (such as DELIVERY or INTEREST) is part of the record key. The maintenance screen layout, titles and help text are held for each field in another file so that even adding a new section to be used for some other set of values does not require a program change (except where the values will be used of course).

Over the years I have moved to more and more dynamic systems that use tables, lists and dictionaries to drive the processing and these are held in configuration files, or built from SQL table field names or from templates. In some cases the programs have no individual named fields in the source code that relate to the data being processed, the names, positions and type all come from a configuration file and the transformations from a table therein and the output is templated.

The program becomes a highly specialised script interpreter with all the processing defined by the configuration/script file.

As a simple example you could look at the Cobol generator that I posted here a couple of months ago. Actually it could generate anything given an appropriate configuration file and template.

'Let me see... the program hasn't been compiled in several years... ahhhh,

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there it is, you ran it using last month's parameters/values, you didn't change them to this month's.'

There again I have programs that shift the month's parameters so that these become the correct default and only require specific input if a previous month's report is required.

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