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**ARIZONA ADMINISTRATIVE  
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**REVIEW OF FACTS™  
OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES  
MANUAL**

**Final Report  
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## **REVIEW OF FACTS™ OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES MANUAL**

The Arizona Administrative Office of the Courts requested that the National Center for State Courts review the AOC's FACTS™ Operational Procedures Manual as part of the Court Operations Analysis of the Tucson Municipal Court project. This manual provides guidance to courts implementing and using the FACTS™ court case management application. The manual reviewed by NCSC project team does not specify a version of FACTS™ to which the manual is applicable. Therefore it may be assumed that the manual is applicable to the only version of FACTS™ currently operating in the Arizona courts. However, throughout the manual, there are various references to features that do not perform accurately, but are expected to be corrected in a revised version of FACTS™ to be made available at a later date. It is also evident that after reading the manual, the version of FACTS™ described operates on an MS-DOS™ platform although this is never stated. This review is not related to the current project, a court operations analysis at the Tucson Municipal Court, as that court is implementing a version of FACTS™ which operates in the Windows™ environment and contains features not currently available in any implemented FACTS™ software operating on a Windows™ platform. The NCSC project team was informed by the AOC that a Windows™ version of FACTS™ is currently installed in some Arizona courts of limited jurisdiction but that version does not contain the Officer Scheduling and Court Calendaring modules needed by the Tucson Municipal Court.

Further complicating the review of this Operations Procedures Manual is the need to distinguish between software features and the presentation and explanation of those features in the manual. In addition, attempting to analyze the material presented in the manual relative to Trial Court Performance Standards (TCPS) and ABA Standards of Trial Court Performance as outlined in the tasks for this project is also more difficult. Analysis of FACTS™ software for its conformance to TCPS and/or ABA Standards is a project of considerable depth and requires consultant time not budgeted under the current project. It is assumed that implementation of measures and standards for case processing were considered during the definition of functional requirements for this software by the

Arizona AOC. It is clear that FACTS™ provides for certain measures and financial and case processing controls in both the data it gathers and the reports it provides.

This review is organized in three sections on the manual itself: Presentation, Organization, and Accessibility. The NCSC project team has tried to limit discussion to the Operational Procedures Manual rather than the software features it documents but in some instances it is the software that truly drives whether or not the manual reaches its goal of presenting useful information to its users. In the last section of this report, Application, some of the difficulties encountered in the documentation because of the way the software operates are discussed.

## I. PRESENTATION

Presentation of material in the Operational Procedures Manual is difficult to read and understand. Use of fully justified paragraphs that completely fill the page to its margins belies the easy-to-read disclaimer in the manual's first paragraph. The horizontal lines and gray bars used to mark and create space give the impression of serious and difficult material. There is no white space for the reader to make their own notes and remarks. There is nothing to relieve the reader's eye. There are no screen prints – only field names presented in a coded protocol that one must continually refer back to the first section's explanation to understand. There is no illustration of the application being explained and no completed examples of screens are given.

Material is not presented in levels of use such as beginner, experienced, or system management user. While all information is parsed to the lowest level of understanding, the authors also make some assumptions about the readers' familiarity with computers in general and the application in particular. For example, references are made to the "ring menu"<sup>1</sup> without the term being defined. In some instances the example shown contradicts the explanation given. For example, "BUSINESS NAMES" should appear in full without spaces. EXAMPLES: WALMART, KMART, ST PAINTING, JB SALES,

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<sup>1</sup> Section A1, Page 3.

HARRISON HAT SHOPPE”.<sup>2</sup> Obviously, spaces exist between “ST” and “PAINTING”, “JB” and “SALES”, and “HARRISON”, “HAT”, and “SHOPPE”.

## II. ORGANIZATION

The manual is organized by function as defined by the FACTS™ application. Within each section, information is presented consistently and that presentation is defined in the first section of the manual. This organization should be consistently adhered to and applied throughout the manual. However, in reviewing the instruction “SPELL IN FULL all Person/Party names, except for the middle initial. The PARTY NAME SCREEN allows 30 spaces for the LAST NAME, 18 spaces for FIRST name, and 12 spaces for Middle name”<sup>3</sup>, the defined organization for data element names is not followed. Within this single instruction, field names are referred to in three different methods, only one of which adheres to the standards established for presentation in the first section of the manual. In addition, why does the application allow for a complete spelling of the middle name if the instruction is to input only the middle initial?

No overview of the application is given. The manual cannot stand on its own as documentation for the FACTS™ application or a court’s use of that application but must be used in conjunction with some other tool. References to field names do not reflect the data contained in the field. For example, “DEFENDANT MIDDLE NAME”<sup>4</sup> is the data element name referenced in the manual but instructions for entry of data into this field indicate that only the middle initial should be entered, not the complete middle name.<sup>5</sup> Fields on the various screens are not defined; it is assumed that the reader will understand what data is to be entered into the field. And while some are obvious, others are not. For example, what is “ORIGIN”?<sup>6</sup> Is it place of birth, ethnicity, or race?

Section 3a presents required data for citations in chart form. However, within the chart, some requirements for the data appear counter-intuitive. SPEED is required but

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<sup>2</sup> Section A2, Page 2.

<sup>3</sup> Section A2, Page 2.

<sup>4</sup> Section A3, Page 2.

<sup>5</sup> Section A3a, Page 2.

<sup>6</sup> Section A3a, Page 3.

only if available.<sup>7</sup> PLED TO CHARGES: CHARGE CLASS is both generated automatically and required manual data entry on the same screen during the life of a case.<sup>8</sup>

The user is instructed to search first for the party's name in the database and if the party data is already stored on the database, that information will be used by the application to fill the CITATION ENTRY SCREEN if the data entry operator so indicates.<sup>9</sup> The user is also advised that data may be restricted at the party and case level.<sup>10</sup> Yet, no explanation is given as to what the user should do if data is restricted for the party in one case and not in another. Because the database organization is not available, we cannot know if data is stored more than once (one time for each case) or only once and then associated to numerous cases. The manual focuses on instructing the user how to fill screens with data and in what order screens should be used. While necessary, it none the less does not fully explain the application or the database it creates.

FACTS™ permits multiple uses of the same screens for different purposes. For example, the CASH BOND REFUND SCREEN is used both to refund or exonerate a cash bond and disburse a cash bond to another court. The only differences in the documentation are in the instructions for PAY TO, ADDRESS, and MEMO fields.<sup>11</sup> The repeated use of a boilerplate makes it very easy for the user to overlook the important differences between the two procedures. Use of a boilerplate does make for consistent presentation of material and ensures that like material is organized similarly but it also lulls the reader into a sense of *déjà vu* thus the reader may not note important differences.

### III. ACCESSIBILITY

The organization of the manual does not permit the user different ways to access the information they need. There are no glossaries, no data element definitions, no listings of almost identical functions, no compilation of hot keys, no overall clues to the

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<sup>7</sup> Section A3a, Page 3.

<sup>8</sup> Section A3a, Page 5.

<sup>9</sup> Section B1a, Page 3.

<sup>10</sup> Section A4, Page 2.

<sup>11</sup> See Sections M3b3 and M3c.

application. There is only one way into the information and that is by function. No distinction is made between information that pertains to system or table setup and information regarding entry of cases and parties except within the text itself. No complete listing of codes used in each field is available in this manual. Such a list may duplicate help screens found within the application itself, however it is sometimes easier to determine the correct code if one can view all of them.

#### IV. APPLICATION

It is notable that the warnings throughout the Operational Procedures Manual highlight issues within the application itself. For example, the warning to the user that the MANUAL ALLOCATION SCREEN permits the user to receipt more money than is owed indicates that there is no check within the application to sentencing and disposition information. Social security numbers are available through the Public Assistance function of one version of FACTS™. The user is advised to enter through the last field on a screen to save case data.

Other issues highlighted throughout the documentation are the inconsistent navigation methods through and between screens. The user presses the ENTER key to skip through a field, to exit a screen, and to select a highlighted name to drill further into the data. In some instances, the ARROW key is used to continue scrolling through data. In others, a FUNCTION key is used to drill down or obtain additional data. The user may also press the ESCAPE key to navigate between screens. There is no overall guide to navigation given in the manual. Sometimes, the user depresses the SPACE bar twice to exit a screen. It was not possible to discern the specific logic that was applied to navigation in the review of this material although it is assumed that some type of logical pattern does exist.

Some information may not be accepted on initial entry but only after the case and party (ies) have been established in the database. Such information must be added after initial entry but before the entry is actually posted to the database for retention. Other information such as DEPUTY CODE, COURT ID, and COURT LOCATION must be entered repeatedly when it should be tied to the USER ID. In certain instances, users

must manually enter the default instead of the application pre-filling the data. For example, on entry of a citation, the user is advised to “always key a ‘Y’ and enter the charges from the citation.”<sup>12</sup> The user is also told to “always enter ‘N’” when the application asks “Assign Case Number for Each Violation (Y/N)”.<sup>13</sup>

The use of the PARTY NAME to index vehicle license plate numbers from parking tickets also seems particularly confusing. Data entered in this field may be used in a search query to the database. This is another example of the use of a screen for a purpose different from the original intent.<sup>14</sup> Where the same screen is used for different purposes, it would be better if the data element names on the screen were masked to reflect the new purpose while the screen’s interactions with the database would remain the same. For example, when entering a parking ticket, the user would use a screen that had a VEHICLE LICENSE PLATE NUMBER field rather than a PARTY NAME field and input the license plate number there. The application would store the license plate number in the same location as it does party name permitting a search on that license plate number.

Another inconsistency noted in the documentation is the use of zeroes as filler for date fields and a space as filler in the count field. While this may have to do with the underlying declaration of the field attributes, it is still confusing to the user who must remember zeroes if it is a date but a space if the count number is less than 10. In some instances, a field is skipped if the amount is zero. In this instance it is difficult to determine if the amount is truly zero or if the data entry operator forgot to fill the field.

## V. CONCLUSION

The types of inconsistencies mentioned above in an application itself make its documentation particularly difficult. However, it is a tribute to the conscientious understanding of FACTS™ by the Administrative Office of the Courts that their manual

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<sup>12</sup> Section B1a, Page 6.

<sup>13</sup> Section B1a, Page 7.

<sup>14</sup> The CITATIONS ENTRY screen is used for the entry of parking tickets and non-parking ordinance violations as well as moving and non-moving traffic citations.



is able to alert users to these potential problems. While any user manual is subject to criticism the day after information is captured and published on hard copy, this manual does provide a FACTS™ user with the facts needed to get the application up and running and make it useful.

## **VI. RECOMMENDATION**

Therefore, it is recommended that in the development of the FACTS™ manual for the Tucson Municipal Court the Arizona Administrative Office of the Courts improve its presentation, organization and accessibility as discussed in this report.