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Application Manual for:

'Lost and Found' System

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1 Purpose of System

For most organizations, dealing with 'Lost and Found' issues is a necessary inconvenience. The *'Lost and Found'* Application is designed to make this unavoidable task as easy and efficient as possible.

The system has lots of flexibility built into it to allow adjusting for the way the organization works.

Note: As with every database, the efficiency of this application depends not only on its design but also on the careful data maintenance by the user(s).

2 The Application

The Application consists of 3 files:

- Manual.pdf (the Manual in pdf format)
- LaF_be.mdb (the back-end of the application)
- LaFxx.mdb (the front-end of the application, with xx being the version number)

2.1 The Manual

Set-up installs a copy of the Manual file in the same folder as the front-end. This is necessary to access the Manual at any time from the Switchboard while working with the application. ***If the front-end is moved to a different folder after the initial installation, the Manual has to be moved too.***

To open the Manual.pdf file, the Adobe Acrobat Reader has to be installed on your computer (free downloads of this software are available on www.adobe.com).

Note: It pays to carefully read the manual before setting up and using the application.

2.2 The Back-End

The Back-End of the database stores the data and makes them available to all users.

In a multi-user environment, the Back-End has to be installed in a folder on the network. Each user has to ***have full access rights*** to this folder on the network.

When operating the application as Stand-Alone (only one user), front-end and backend are installed by default in the same folder.

If the application was originally set up as a Stand Alone, it is always possible to change to Multi-User at a later time. Copy the LaF_be.mdb file into a folder on the network (each user has to ***have full access rights*** to this folder). Make sure you delete the original LaF_be.mdb file (or there is a distinct possibility that different users will use different data from different back-ends).

Note: There is no need to purchase additional seats when moving from Stand-Alone to Multi-User. The application comes with an unlimited number of seats.

2.3 The Front-End

While all the data are stored in the back-end, the front-end contains the functionality of the application.

The front-end can be either installed on the local hard-drive of each user's machine or in a personal folder on the network. The latter configuration has the advantage that updates can be deployed from the network administrator's machine without having to start up and log into each user's individual computer.

Note: Every user has to work with its own front-end.

3 Application Set-Up

Especially when setting up a Multi-User application, Owl Database Applications recommends that this is done by the network administrator.

3.1 Set-Up from ‘original’ CD

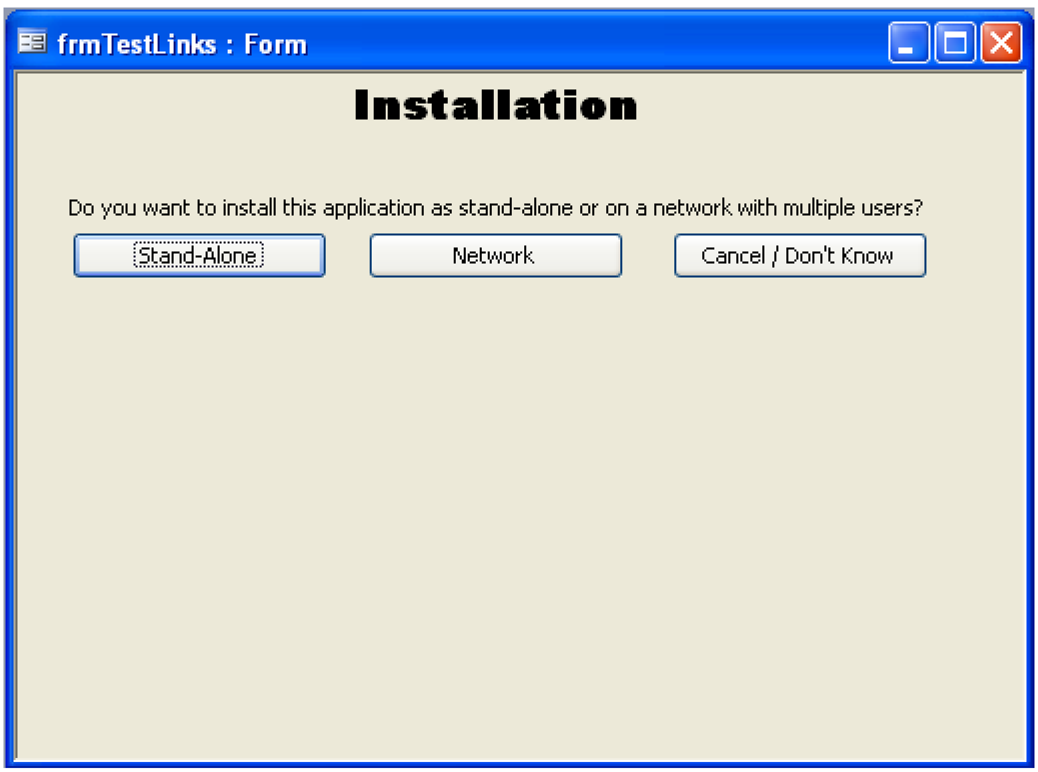
This part describes setting up from a CD containing the setup.exe file (it doesn’t matter if you purchased the application on a CD or burnt the downloaded files on a CD).

Insert the CD into the CD player. If the Set-Up Wizard doesn’t start on its own, find the file by using Windows Explorer and double click on it.

After accepting the End-User License Agreement you have the choice between ‘Typical’ or ‘Custom Installation’ configuration. ‘Typical’ configuration automatically creates a new folder ‘LostAndFound’ in C:\Program Files, whereas ‘Custom Installation’ lets the user decide where the application will be installed.

By default, setup also installs a short-cut on your desktop.

When you open the application for the first time, the ‘Installation’ form appears.

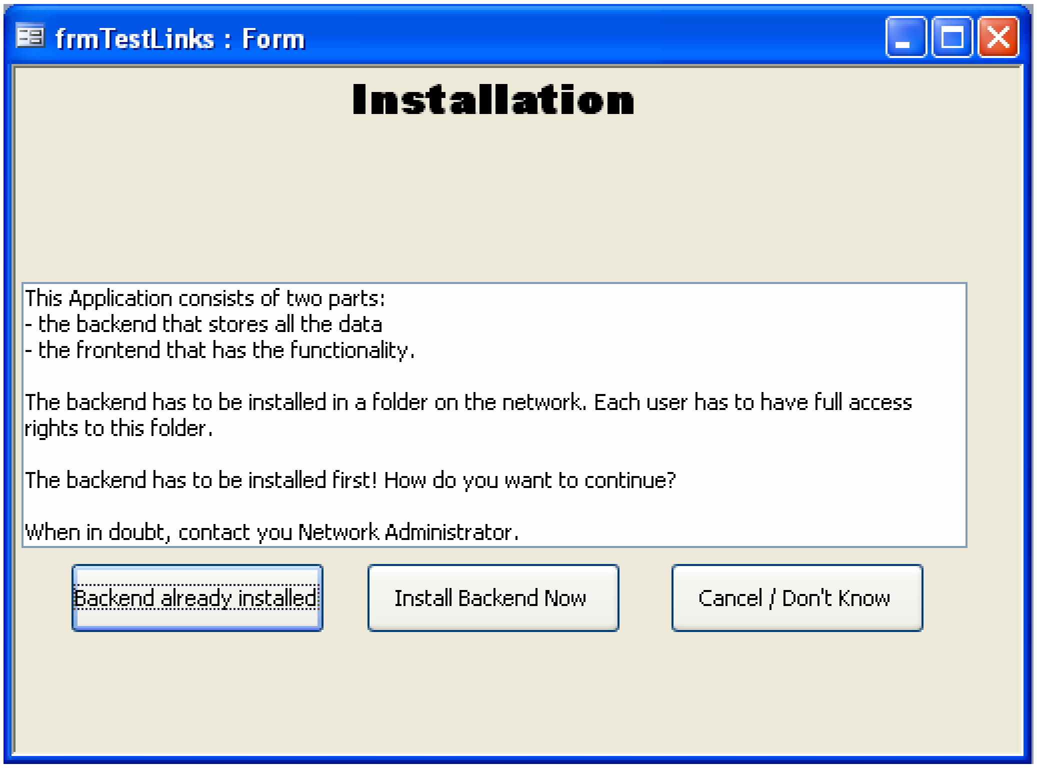


3.1.1 Stand-Alone

The application tries to link the front-end to the back-end in the same folder. If not successful, you are asked to point to the LaF_be.mdb file.

3.1.2 Network

After clicking on the ‘Network’ button, the form offers further options.



3.1.2.1 Install Backend Now

The first time you are setting up the application, choose this button. You are then asked to point to the folder on the network you want to use to install the backend (if you haven’t already done so you can create this folder now). The back-end will be copied into that folder.

After successful linking, you are asked if you want to enter the product key. If you purchased the application, you might do it now (it has to be entered only once, regardless of the number of users).

Remember, all users have to have full access rights to this folder. If your current login doesn’t have the rights to the selected folder, you might be denied access. Click the ‘Cancel / Don’t Know’ button to close the application, set up the folder correctly and repeat process.

To speed up further installations, you might want to remember where you installed the back-end.

3.1.2.2 Backend already installed

For the second and all further installations, you have to use this button to prevent the back-end from being copied again. When asked, select the file LaF_be.mdb in the correct folder.

After successful linking you are either asked if you want to enter the product key (in case you haven’t already done so) or the Switchboard appears. The application is now ready for use.

3.1.3 Cancel / Don’t Know

At any time during the installation process, just click one of these buttons and the application closes. You can start the process again at a later time.

3.2 Other ways to install

After installing the application on the first computer, you can copy/paste the front-end (***plus Manual***) from this machine to all other user’s computers (if the front-ends are residing in a personal network folder, otherwise with the intermediary of a CD). If the first front-end has been set up properly, you won’t have to go through the linking process. All that’s left to do is install a shortcut on the desktop of each computer.

4 Set-Up Data

The application comes with suggested parameters. However before using the ‘Lost and Found’ application, these parameters have to be configured to the user’s specific requirements.

Note: If you are doing this step before starting to use the application, you can delete lines in the different forms. Once started using, do not delete entries, but mark them as ‘Obsolete’. That way you won’t be able to use them in further records, without loosing information.

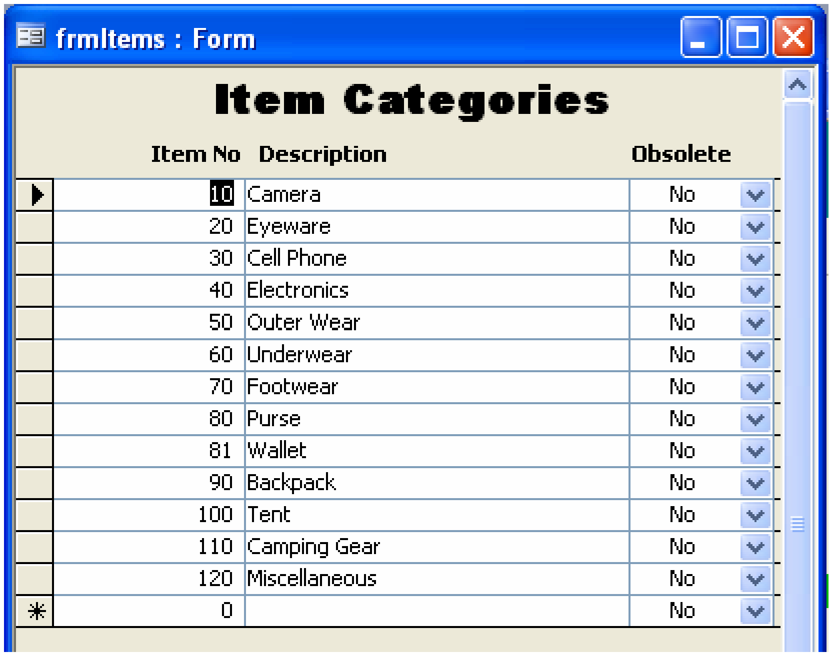
4.1 Item Categories

In order to allow comparing lost and found items, each item has to have an ‘Item Category’ assigned from a predetermined list. This list has to be set up before using the application.

How to get there: From the Main Switchboard click on ‘Maintenance’ and on the Maintenance Switchboard on ‘Item Categories’.

Create the list according your requirements. The item categories will be displayed with drop-down boxes, ordered by ‘Item No’. The gaps between the numbers are deliberate so additional items can be inserted later in the right order. (See Note 2)

To add a new item start with the Item No in the last row (marked with an asterisk). After you close the form, the numbers will be put in the right order.



frmItems : Form

Item Categories

Item No	Description	Obsolete
10	Camera	No
20	Eyeware	No
30	Cell Phone	No
40	Electronics	No
50	Outer Wear	No
60	Underwear	No
70	Footwear	No
80	Purse	No
81	Wallet	No
90	Backpack	No
100	Tent	No
110	Camping Gear	No
120	Miscellaneous	No
0		No

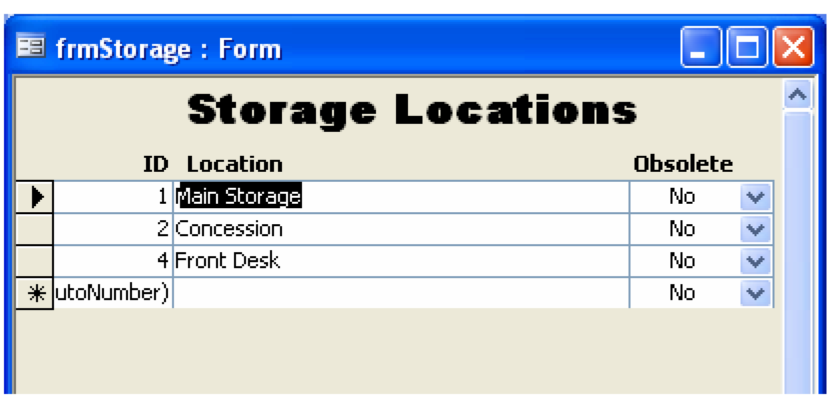
Note 1: Do not create too many items. It will make it harder to correctly assign a new item to a category and therefore increases the risk of mistakes. Depending on the variety of Lost and Found items your organization has to deal with, 5 to 15 categories should be ok.

Note 2: Once set up, **Do Not** change Item numbers or change the 'Description' to a different meaning. Lost and Found items will be matched based on the assigned 'Item No'. Changing the numbers after the original setup will cause mismatches, deleting them disappeared records. After you set 'Obsolete' to 'Yes', you will no longer be able to select this category for new entries.

4.2 Storage Locations

Found items have to be stored somewhere. Depending on the organization, one or a multitude of places deal with Lost and Founds. The idea of this information is to know where a found item is. If a front desk accepts a found item and forwards it later to a central location, the front desk enters its location and central storage updates the information as soon as it receives the item. So basically every location with a terminal to handle Lost and Found needs to have its own location assigned.

How to get there: From the Main Switchboard click on 'Maintenance' and on the Maintenance Switchboard on 'Storage Locations'.



frmStorage : Form

Storage Locations

ID	Location	Obsolete
1	Main Storage	No
2	Concession	No
4	Front Desk	No
utoNumber)		No

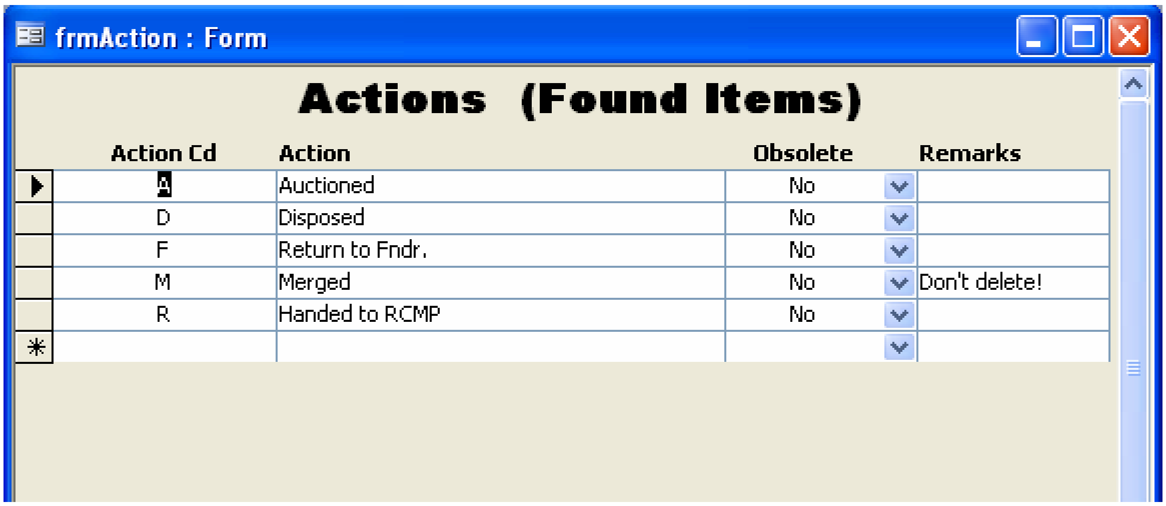
When creating a new location, just enter the name into the column ‘Location’. The ID number is assigned automatically and is for used for programming purposes only. So don’t worry about missing numbers.

Note: Once set up, **Do Not** delete Items or change the ‘Location’ to a different meaning. If a location is no longer used just change ‘Obsolete’ to ‘Yes’ and it can no longer be used in new records.

4.3 Actions

Not all found items are claimed and from time to time your organization has to get rid of stuff collecting dust for years. There are different ways for disposing of these items. They are predefined with the ‘Action’ form (the ‘Handed to RCMP’ Action is a suggestion for items of extremely high value or that might appear dubious)

How to get there: From the Main Switchboard click on ‘Maintenance’ and on the Maintenance Switchboard on ‘Actions’.


frmAction : Form

Actions (Found Items)

Action Cd	Action	Obsolete	Remarks
A	Auctioned	No	
D	Disposed	No	
F	Return to Fndr.	No	
M	Merged	No	Don't delete!
R	Handed to RCMP	No	

- To enter a new action, go to the line marked with an Asterisk.
- Enter a unique Action Code into the first column (1 Letter)
- Describe the Action (maximum 15 characters including spaces)

Note 1: The ‘Merged’ Action is used to programmatically merge lost and found items. **Do Not** delete or change in any way.

Note 2: Once set up, **Do Not** delete Actions or change the Action to a different meaning. Set the ‘Obsolete’ field to ‘Yes’ instead.

4.4 Value of Objects

The application allows assigning a ‘Value’ to each item, not in Dollars but in one of 5 levels:

- Sentimental
- Low
- Medium
- High
- Very High

These levels are not accessible for editing. The organization will have to establish some guidelines on how to use them.

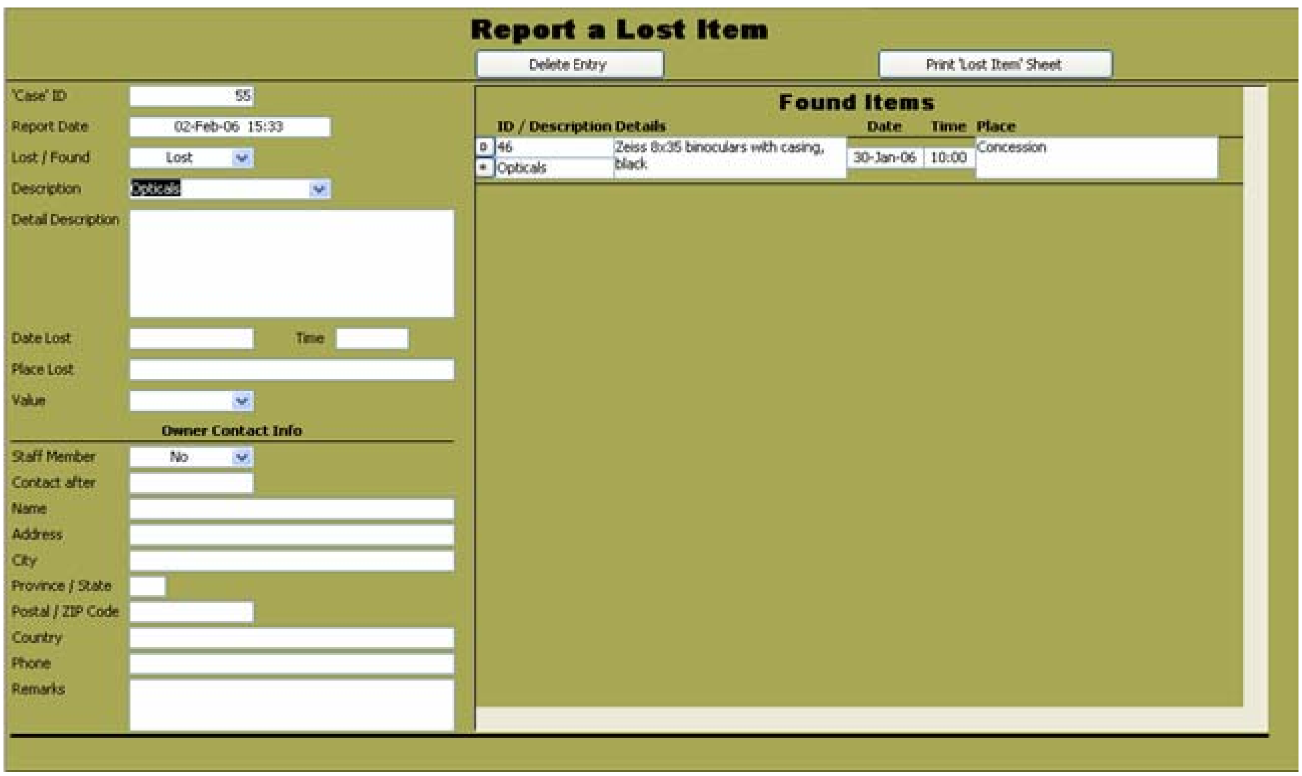
5 Working with Lost and Found Items

The idea behind the 'Lost and Found' Application is to give the user an immediate overview of the items of the opposite event, in other words a found item is immediately matched with similar lost items that were reported lost before the date the item was found.

Note: to allow for inaccurate memory, an overlapping period of 7 days is programmed into the application.

5.1 Reporting a Lost Item with the 'Report a Lost Item' Form

How to get there: On the Main Switchboard click on 'Report a Lost Item' and the 'Report a Lost Item' form opens.



5.1.1 Collect the Information

Start by entering the 'Report Date' (the date / time the item was reported lost). If you double-click on the field, today's date and time is entered. After hitting [Enter] or [Tab], the 'Lost / Found' field is automatically set to 'Lost'.

Select an item from the 'Description' dropdown menu and all open found items of the selected category appear on the right hand side of the form.

Use the 'Detail Description' field to enter as many details about the lost object as possible (max 255 characters)

Enter the fields 'Date Lost' and 'Time' to record date and time the item was lost (the application will not let you enter a 'Date Lost' that is later than the 'Report Date').
As soon as the 'Date Lost' is entered, the matching found items will be reduced to the ones found later than lost (with a 7 day overlap).

Continue with entering the place the item was lost and the estimated item value.

Finish with filling in the contact information of the owner of the lost item. If the owner is a staff member, change the 'Staff' field to 'Yes'. Depending of the organization's policies, in this case the name of the owner will be enough.

Use the 'Contact after' field if the owner is traveling and back at home after a specific date.

Enter address and phone number carefully so the owner can be contacted should the lost item be found.

If there are any specifics about the lost item (beyond what has already be entered into the 'Detail Description' field) or the owner, use the 'Remarks' field to record them.

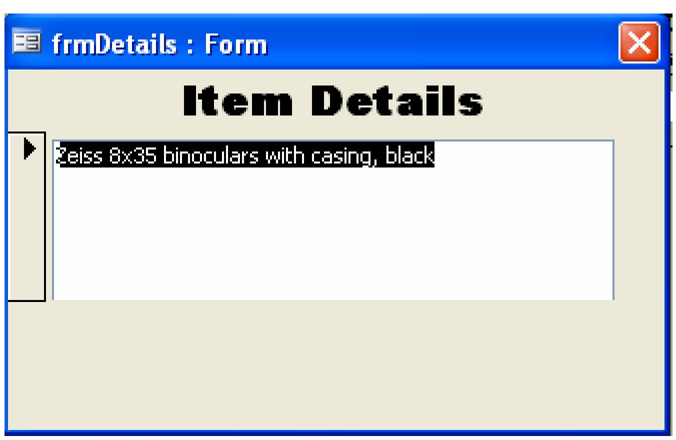
If the lost item can not be matched up with a found item, print a 'Lost Item Sheet' by clicking on the respective button at the top right of the form. Hand the sheet to the customer as proof of having entered the loss into the database and also for him/her to have the 'Case ID' for further reference and inquiries.

If, at any time, you decide not to continue entering the item, click the 'Delete Entry' button. That way you prevent incomplete records from cluttering the database.

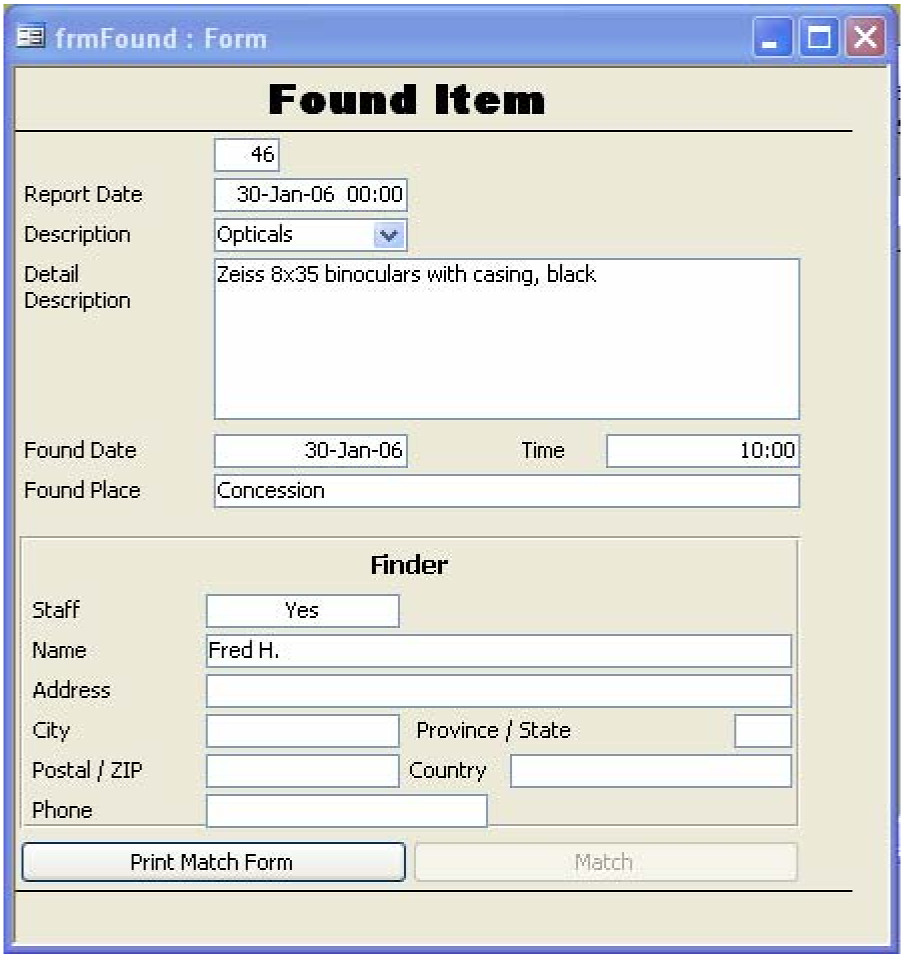
5.1.2 Matching Items on the 'Report a Loss' Form

Each item on the list of matching found items (on the right hand side of the form) has two buttons.

Click on the D button to show the 'Detail Description' for this specific item (the space on the 'Found Item' list might be too small to display the whole 'Detail Description')



If you located the matching 'Found Item', click on the * button of this item and the 'Found Item' form opens, showing all details of the selected item.



If this is the right item, click the 'Print Match Form'. If you return the found item now, fill out the bottom part of the printed form, let it sign by the owner and file it as 'paper trail'. If the item is stored in a central location, send the owner (with the 'Match Form') to this location to claim the item. The information on the form will speed up the handing over process.

After handing over the item, click the 'Match' button (only available after printing) to record in the database that the two entries are 'matched'.

5.2 Reporting a Lost Item with the ‘Search for Found Item’ Form

How to get there: On the Main Switchboard click on ‘Search for Found Items’ and the ‘Search for Found Item’ form opens.

This way of reporting is more for the case when a customer just wants to check if the item he/she lost has already been found, without necessarily reporting it.

When opening, the form shows all open found items on record. By using the ‘Item’ and / or ‘Date’ (Date Lost) field, the search can be narrowed down. Select an item from the drop-down menu and the form shows only found items of this category. Enter the date the item was lost and the form shows only items found after this date (minus 7 days overlap). By clicking on the ‘Item’- or the ‘Date’ button, the entry in the corresponding field is deleted and the search widened.

By clicking on the 

button (right hand side of form) the ‘Item Details’ form of the selected found item will pop up.

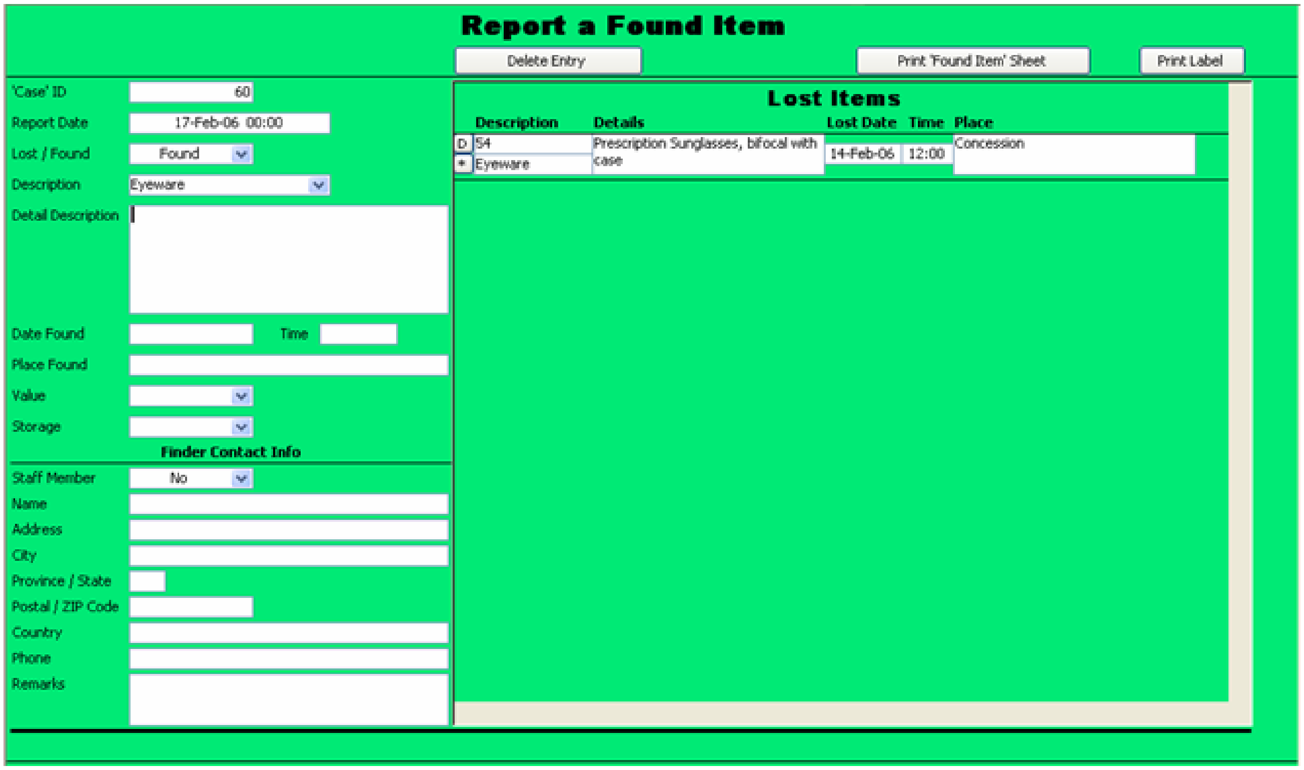
When you have a match or if the customer decides to formally report the loss click on the 

button (on left hand side of item) and the ‘Report a Lost Item’ form opens. Today’s date as well as the entries in the ‘Item’ and ‘Date’ field (used for the search) are automatically transferred into the opening form.

Proceed as above (4.1)

5.3 Report a Found Item

How to get there: On the Main Switchboard click on 'Report a Found Item' and the 'Report a Found Item' form opens.



5.3.1 Collect the information

Start with entering the 'Report Date'. Double clicking on the field will enter today's date (and time)
At the same time, the 'Lost / Found' field turns automatically to 'Found'

Select the item category from the drop-down menu of the field 'Description' and all items of the same category reported missing appear on the right hand side of the form.

Enter the detailed description of the found item into the field 'Detail Description'. Use the available 255 characters to record as many details as possible. Remember that primarily this detailed description will be used to find the owner.

Enter the 'Date' the item was found. After doing so (after hitting the [Enter] key) the list on the right hand side of the form will be reduced to the lost items lost before the entered date (with a 7 day overlap to allow for inaccurate memory)

Select a 'Value' range.

Enter the 'Storage' of the found item.

Suggestion: if you have a decentralized organization that accepts found items at several locations, enter the place the item was handed over as ‘Storage’ place. Print a ‘Found Item Sheet’ and move it together with the item to the central location at a convenient moment. When the item arrives the central Lost and Found storage just change the location (all the information is already entered into the database). That way the item is better traceable.

Enter the ‘Finder Contact Info’ and use the ‘Remarks’ field to record additional information about item and/or Finder.

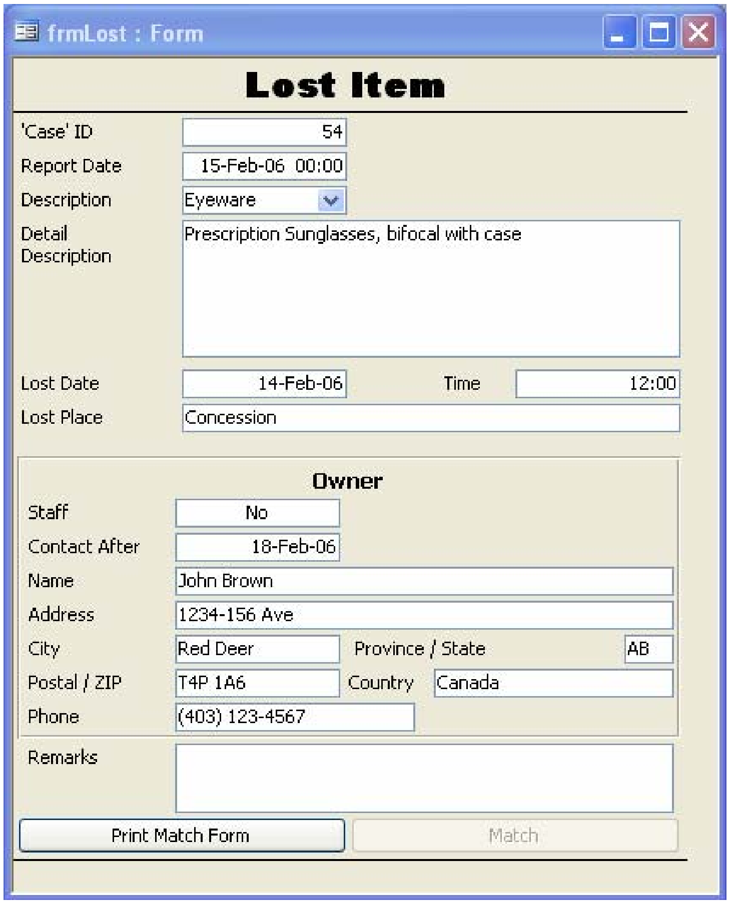
If required, print the ‘Found Item Sheet’ to accompany the item to ‘Central Storage’ (see suggestion further up).

If your location is equipped with a Label Printer, you can print it now to identify the found object (especially the ‘Case Number’)

If, at any time, you decide not to continue entering the item, click the ‘Delete Entry’ button. That way you prevent incomplete records from cluttering the database.

5.3.2 Match with a Lost Item

Each ‘Lost Item’ on the right hand side has two buttons. The  button to view the full ‘Detail Description’ of the item and the  button to open the ‘Lost Item’ form in case the found item was already reported lost.



Based on the information on this form you should be able to decide what to do with the found item. If another place makes that decision, print the ‘Match’ form by clicking on the button and send the item together with the ‘Match’ form to that place for further processing.

If the item can be given back now, print the ‘Match’ form and let it sign by the owner. Before closing the ‘Lost Item’ form, click the ‘Match’ button (only available after printing) to record in the database that the two entries are ‘matched’. Send the form back to the central place as ‘paper trail’.

5.4 Looking up Lost or Found Items

The forms described above serve only to record Lost and Found items. To lookup a specific item (be it to answer an inquiry or to edit the information), click on the appropriate button on the Main Switchboard (‘Lookup a Lost Item’ / ‘Lookup a Found Item’).

Contrary to the forms described above, the opening forms allow to navigate through all records regarding Lost or Found items.

Enter the Case ID of the item you want to look up into the field ‘Find Case No.’ in the top left corner on the form and hit [Enter]. The form goes to the requested item.

If the requested item is no longer in the active part of the database (for details reference the chapter about Database Maintenance), after hitting [Enter], a message box pops up saying ‘No such Case’.

The form might change its color to red. This means that the displayed item is no longer ‘Open’. The bottom line of the form shows what happened when with the item.

The ‘Lookup’ forms have the same functionality as the corresponding ‘Report’ forms. You can use the ‘Lookup’ forms to ‘Match’ lost and found items for as long as the information is in the active part of the database (for details reference the chapter about Database Maintenance).

6 Database Maintenance

Depending on the size and activity of your organization, hundreds of reported Losts and Founds can accumulate within a short period of time. The number of records has a direct influence on how fast one can access records. It also influences how quickly you can match Lost and found items as the number of items to take into consideration balloons.

It is time well spent to put continuous efforts into maintaining the database.

6.1 Active Part of Database

The database is designed to have an active part where all the records regarding recent Losts and Founds are stored and a 'history' part that contains the 'important' records from the past. There are no activities designed for these data.

The following kind of records are considered important and moved to the 'history' part:

- Matched lost items
- All records regarding 'closed' found items

Note: Open found items always stay in the active part

6.2 'Open Lost and Found Items' Report

Start a maintenance cycle by printing the 'Open Lost and Found Items' report

How to get there: on the Main Switchboard click 'Reports' and on the Reports Switchboard 'Open Lost and Found Items'.

The report shows first the Found Items by Item Category. Each Category is further divided into aging groups. After the Found items, the Lost items are shown with the same grouping.

Use this report for the further maintenance activities.

6.3 Regular Maintenance

It is highly recommendable to spend time on a regular basis and go through the records of open items. Use the 'Lookup a Found Item' / 'Lookup a Lost Item' Forms for this activity

On this occasion check for the right classification of an item (compare detail description with the group the item has been assigned to).

Also try to match Lost and Found items.

6.4 Dispose of Found Items

How to get there: On the Main Switchboard click ‘Maintenance’ and on the Maintenance Switchboard ‘Dispose of Found Items’.

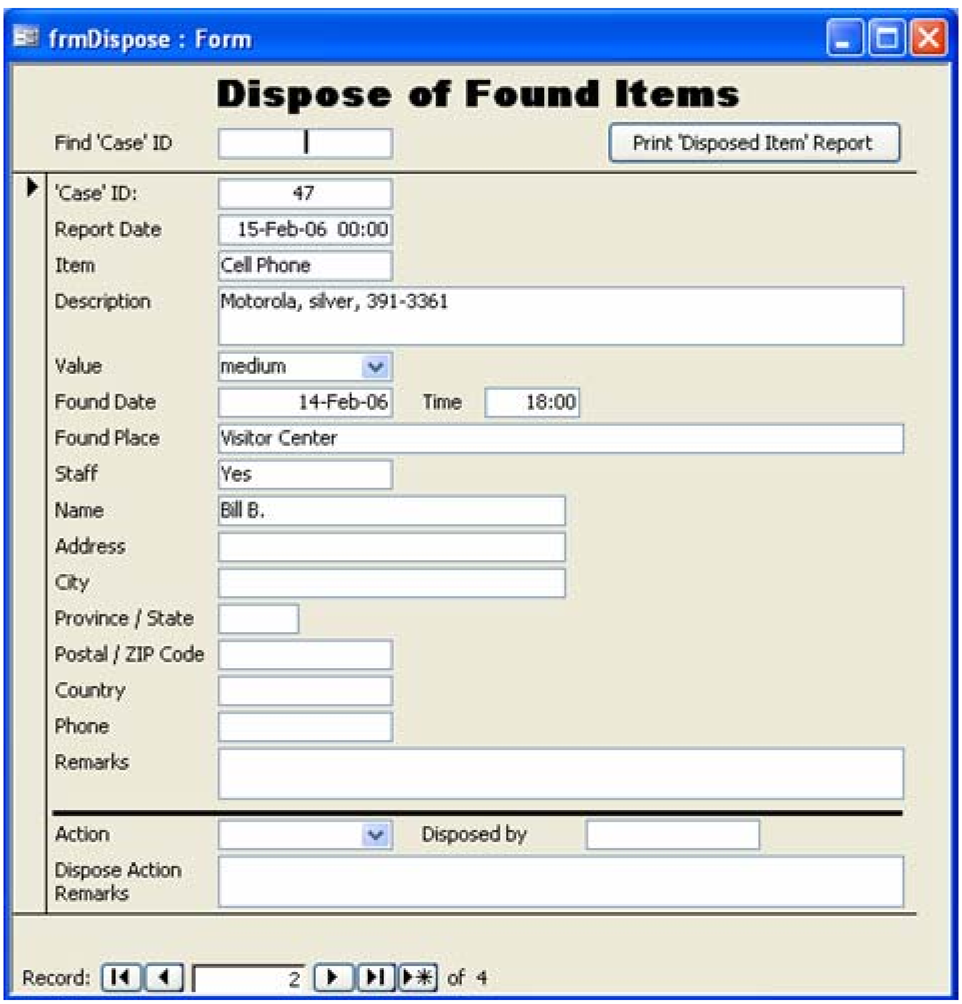
Note: it might be good policy, especially for more valuable items, to check one last time with the ‘Lookup Found Items’ form if it can not be matched with a reported loss, before disposing it.

Based on the ‘Open Lost and Found Items’ report start with the oldest Found items and work your way backwards. The organizations policy on Found items defines what items you can dispose of.

Enter the ‘Case ID’ of the item you want to dispose into the ‘Find Case ID’ field and hit [Enter]. The form synchronizes on this item.

Select the action from the ‘Action’ drop down menu. Enter your name into the ‘Disposed by’ field.

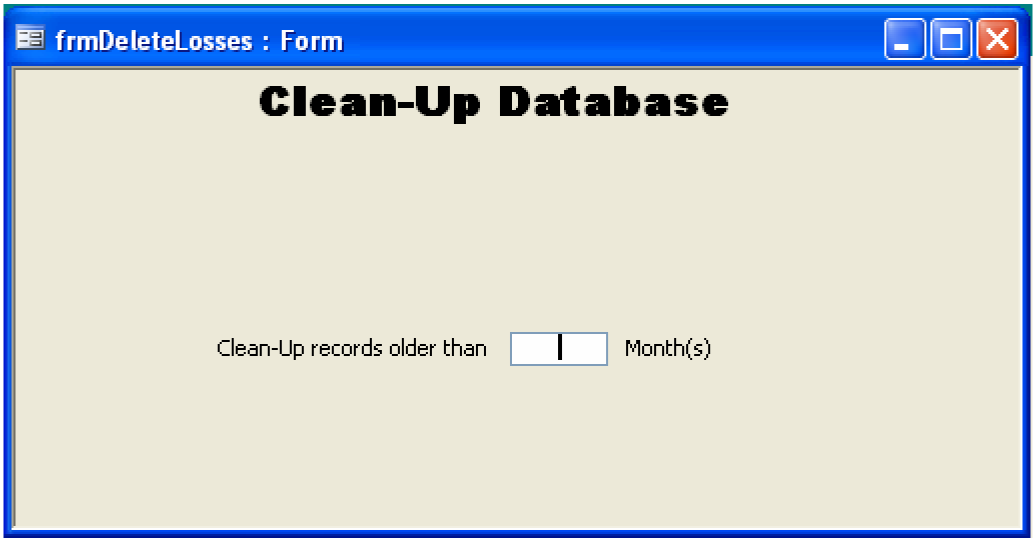
If your organization requires a paper-trail for disposed items, click the ‘Print Disposed Item Report’ button before going to the next item.



6.5 Clean-Up Database

After disposing of found items it is time to clean up the Database.

How to get there: On the Main Switchboard click ‘Maintenance’ and on the Maintenance Switchboard ‘Clean-Up Database’.



Enter the number of month beyond which you want to clean up. The system will prompt you with a message box stating the cut-off date and asks you if you want to proceed. If you click ‘Yes’ the following happens:

- All closed records (records marked as merged or any form of disposal) regarding found items, older than the cut-off date will be moved to the history part and deleted from the active part of the database. Still open found records will stay in the active part.

- All records regarding merged found items, older than the cut-off date will be moved to the history part and deleted from the active part of the database.

- All records regarding unmerged found items, older than the cut-off date will be deleted.

Note: above action takes place based on the ‘Date Lost’ or ‘Date Found’ **And Not** the ‘Report Date’

Reprinting the ‘Open Lost and Found Items’ report will show you the effect of your clean up efforts.

6.6 Relink Tables

Use this function if you change from ‘Stand Alone’ to Multi-User’ configuration.

In case different front-ends show different information, one of them might be linked to the wrong back-end. This can happen, if you don’t follow the steps in chapter 3 properly. To remedy this situation, use ‘Relink Tables’ on the ‘Maintenance’ Switchboard.

Before you do so, find out which back-end is the right one and in what folder it resides. Click the ‘Relink Tables’ on the ‘Maintenance’ Switchboard and then ‘Relink’ on the ‘Installation’ form. Selecting the ‘Cancel / Don’t Know’ button will close the application without any changes.