Rooted in Platform-Independence, BBj Supports Borealis Press's Choice of Mac
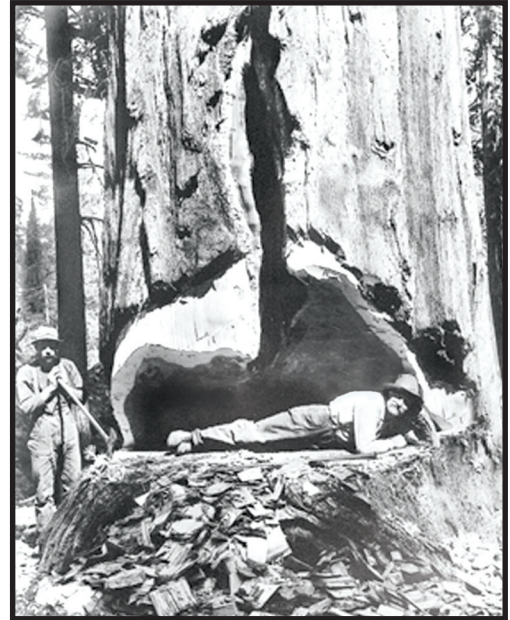
By Susan Darling, Mike Scully

The Borealis Press produces unique and humorous cards for holidays and special events as well as related journals, refrigerator magnets, note cards, and other specialty gift items. Bookstores, gift shops, stationery stores, and boutiques throughout North America and beyond, distribute Borealis products.

L ike many businesses with strong graphics and desktop publishing requirements, The Borealis Press is very fond of and highly dependent on the Apple Macintosh computing platform. However, like any business, they still have a need for basic accounting, inventory control, order processing, payroll, and other business management tasks that require financial software. Because the Mac has a limited market share in the general computer world, Borealis found themselves with fewer software choices that met their needs. Like many Apple-centric enterprises, they had to compromise on the features and functionality of the software with which they ran their operations.

A small company, Borealis outgrew the functionality of their business accounting package that was one of the few available for the Macintosh environment. However, as they saw their sales and operations needs expanding rapidly, the software became a large bottleneck in their operations. "*We had some processes that would take what seemed to be an hour to run,*" said Borealis Operations Manager Aimi Baldwin. "*The package used the Mac standard beach ball that would spin around on the screen to show that it was processing. When we needed a report from history, it would be 'beach ball time' and we would leave for lunch.*"

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"The difference between genius and stupidity is that genius has its limits."
— Albert Einstein

As they shopped for alternatives, Borealis employees kept in mind a unique requirement for their industry: royalties. Like many publishers, they license images (shown above/to the right) and text from various photographers, artists, and authors, and therefore needed to track these for payment and recovery of advances. Along their search, other greeting card publishers recommended their own solution – a blend of Open Systems Accounting Software (OSAS) from TBC International, Inc, a BASIS/OSAS reseller and integration specialist, and an add-on royalty processing suite written by Mike Scully, the owner of Flexible Strategies and a BASIS developer who frequently partners with TBC for customizations.

In conjunction with Richard Paul Thomas of TBC, Mike's ideal solution was OSAS version 7.0 powered by BBj. However, OSAS 7.0 was still in development, and since Borealis needed a quick transition from their Mac-based system, Mike deployed the solution in two phases. In January 2005, Borealis went live with OSAS 6.50 on a Linux server, using their Macs as character terminals. Once the controlled release of OSAS version 7.0 was available, Borealis migrated to the exciting and new graphical, multiplatform, Java-powered version. Since November, Borealis has been running OSAS 7.0 graphically on their six Macintosh desktops (see **Figure 1**), two Windows PCs, and the Linux server, while retaining the characteristic look and feel on each platform.

OSAS®
OPEN SYSTEMS® Accounting Software

"*This was my first experience with BBj and honestly, I was a bit out of my comfort zone, but the migration from PRO/5 to BBj was rather seamless,*" says Mike. "*The syntax was familiar, although the move required some client/server considerations, but all in all it was pretty painless. BBj opens the door much wider to new platform opportunities and markets. It uses better syntax, better command line control, and better debugging. What a great way to have GUI and UNIX/Linux too.*"

Mike has plans to put more of the new capabilities of BBj and WebServices to further use. He wants to write a program to run an online address real-time verification whenever a user adds or edits an address. The user then answers a prompt to "accept or reject the verified address." Mike could also use WebServices to display package delivery information directly on the screen rather than their current process that requires a browser.
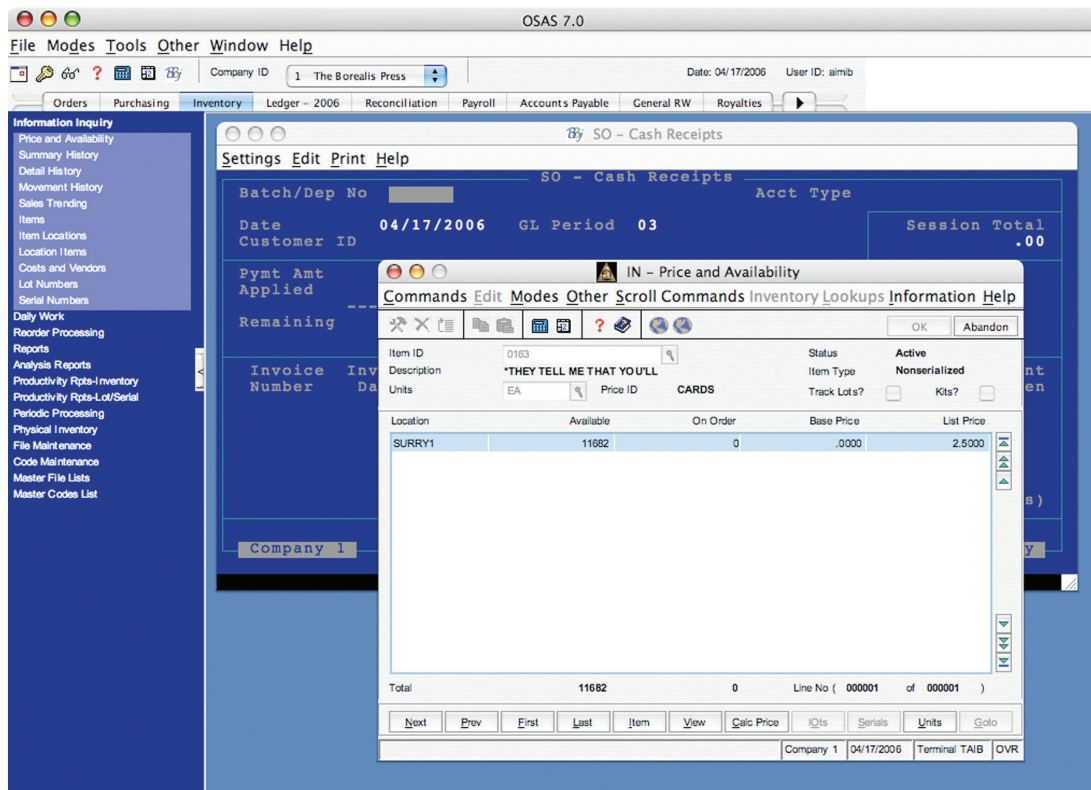
Figure 1. OSAS 7.0 running in GUI and CUI within the MDI on the Apple Mac.

With BBj and Java still so new to so many BBx developers, Mike advises them to get familiar with Java – look for books and other resources to improve their understanding. Brushing up on their understanding of operating system basics and networking fundamentals such as addresses, ports, firewalls, and DNS would help too. Mike adds, "*BBj is so feature-rich, and like Java, fully supports object oriented programming techniques. With tighter security through Enterprise Manager and the option to deploy in mixed CUI and GUI environments, and across different operating systems, BBj is the future.*" ✔BASIS

Mike Scully, founder of Flexible Strategies in Portland, OR, has worked with more than 120 clients across the country in various capacities - custom modifications, needs analysis, hardware implementations, and systems troubleshooting. For over 23 years, Mike has worked with the Open Systems flagship product dating back to their version 1. He has extensive experience in data system integration, hardware, operating systems, LAN and WAN communications, and technical support, with a focus on the needs of distribution, manufacturing, and service companies. He has worked with the BASIS International product suite since BBxProgression/2® and has participated in several TechCon events since 1991.

Mike Scully

For more information, visit Open Systems, Inc. at www.osas.com and The Borealis Press Inc. at www.borealispress.net