

# Decision Explorer®

# NEWSLETTER



Issue 5 Summer 2000

## Welcome!

Welcome to the Summer 2000 edition of the Decision Explorer Newsletter. In this issue the main features deal with password protecting models and an explanation of the mapping options in Decision Explorer. Password protecting models is useful when you want to use models for reference only or as a means of delivering the final outcomes of a piece of work (and so do not want the models to be editable). When you are working in this way you can also use the Decision Explorer demo program as a viewer. You can open a "clean" model of up to 90 concepts in the Decision Explorer demo. (By "clean" we mean a newly saved model which does not have any ghost images of previously created but deleted concepts). This means that you can deliver a series of small models to your colleagues which step them through the thinking associated with your project.

The mapping options explanation is borne out of a number of queries which we have had about why the banded and fanned mapping options exist and how to use them, so I hope that this answers your questions!

We plan to launch a teaching pack in late 2000/ early 2001, so if you are a teacher or a trainer and you are interested in this, please let us know. Some lecturers are already using the Decision Explorer Introductory Workbook as part of their courses. Our plan is to pull all of our teaching materials together and release them in PDF format on CD-ROM so that they can be used for university/college teaching or for training workshops. The documents will be supplied in both A4 and US Letter compatible size formats and will be printable but not editable.

Please remember that we are always interested in hearing from you, so if you have any comments or contributions which you would like to make, please contact us.

*Jenny Brightman, Banxia Software Ltd*

## In this issue

Welcome!	1
News	1
In this issue	1
Password protecting models	2
Mapping options explained	3
Impact Explorer	3
Feedback	3
Events and training courses	4
Reseller contact details	4
Training contacts	4

## News

### [www.ovalmap.com](http://www.ovalmap.com)

Oval mapping is a paper-based form of cognitive mapping, which is described in detail in chapter P2 of the book "Making strategy" (Eden & Ackermann. Sage 1998). The oval mapping method is also covered in John Bryson's book "Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations" (Revised Edition. Jossey-Bass, 1995).

Until now, facilitators using this method had to find their own supply of custom made ovals, usually asking a printer for a special order to cut card or stiff paper to size. At [www.ovalmap.com](http://www.ovalmap.com) you can now find "Post-it®" style ovals. These match the template dimensions given in the references, are pale yellow and have a re-usable adhesive strip (just like a Post-it®). Ovals come in pads of 50 sheets per pad and are sold in packs of 10 pads. Full details can be found at [www.ovalmap.com](http://www.ovalmap.com).

If you would like a free sample oval, please email to [info@banxia.com](mailto:info@banxia.com).

### Come & See Day in the Netherlands

At present we are in the early stages of planning a Come & See Day in the Netherlands. As some of you may know, these are free "taster" events where potential users of Decision Explorer can come and find out more about the software and have a chance to use it, with people on hand to answer questions. To date these events have only been held in the UK. With the expansion of our reseller network, we are starting to plan events further afield. At present, no firm date has been set for this event, however it is likely to take place in the late October/early November 2000 and will be held at the offices of T-Question, in Hoofddorp, just outside Amsterdam. If you would like to be kept informed about this event (or have a colleague in the Netherlands who might be interested), please let us know and we will keep you informed as the plans develop.

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SOFTWARE

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## Password protecting models



Those of you who share models, exchange models with clients or who use models for teaching may well find password protecting models a useful feature. This feature has been in Decision Explorer for many years but, until now, has never been publicised.

Decision Explorer allows you to control the level of access which users have to a model, ranging from full access (no password settings) to read only access. To make full use of the password protection system you must ensure that **all of the users** who you are exchanging models with are using Decision Explorer **version 3.1.2** (This means that you should have service pack 3 installed. Please visit [www.banxia.com](http://www.banxia.com) and follow the Decision Explorer software update links if you need this service pack).

You can pre-set the password status of a model and later give additional access rights to users by using a password system. It is not possible to set up individual user passwords for every member of a large research or management team (and this is not generally how you would try to use the system) but it is possible to set up a default level of access and two passwords per model, to give two groups different levels of access. For example, you might want to give read only access to the sales team, while giving more or full access to the strategy team. Or you might want to give read only access to a review panel, while giving the ability to add and edit new information to the research team (saving full access – allowing adding, editing and deleting new and existing information – for full team meetings, when supervisor access would be used). You may also be working with a client who does not really know how to use the software. Password protection models would remove any worries about information being lost or accidentally changed.

Once password protection has been enabled (by typing the command **superpass <password>**) the default level of model access (when you close, save and open the model again) is set to “None”. This means that the display screen will appear blank i.e. no information is displayed. You may want to change this default, so that the default level of access is “ReadOnly”. This would mean that users do not have to login to view the model. To change the default level of access you use the command **stdlevel <level>**, where <level> is one of the options listed below. You must be logged in as supervisor to be able to change the standard level of access.

Once you have enabled password protection, you can then set one or both of the passwords to give the desired level of access to other users. For example, “**newpass mypassword delprev**” sets up the “DelPrev” level of access for the password “mypassword”. In descending order of capability, the levels of model access that you are most likely to use are as follows:

**Supervisor** – used if you do not take any action or enable the password system. The model is fully editable and the user can change the password settings. All models start off in this mode.

**FullAccess** – the user can fully edit the model (add/delete/edit concepts and links) but not change access control settings.

**DelPrev** – the user can add/edit/delete concepts and links made in the current or immediately previous “session” i.e. concepts that are listed by the LN (list new) command. Concepts can be created and corrected but in subsequent sessions they become unchangeable.

**DelSession** – the user can add/edit/delete concepts and links which were made in the current “session” only i.e. concepts added since loading the model. Thus concepts can be created and corrected but once the model has been saved and closed the user cannot change them.

**ReadOnly** – concepts and links can be viewed, hidden, analysed and moved around the screen but no editing (adding/deleting or text editing) is allowed. In other words, you can change the contents of the views (to explore the model) but you cannot change the “substance” of the model. Note that select boxes in this mode always appear dashed.

**None** – no concepts or links can be seen. This is a being the starting level of access, before the user logs in.

Other levels of access exist and these, together with other password system commands, are detailed on our web pages at <http://www.banxia.com/dexplore/faq/password.html>.

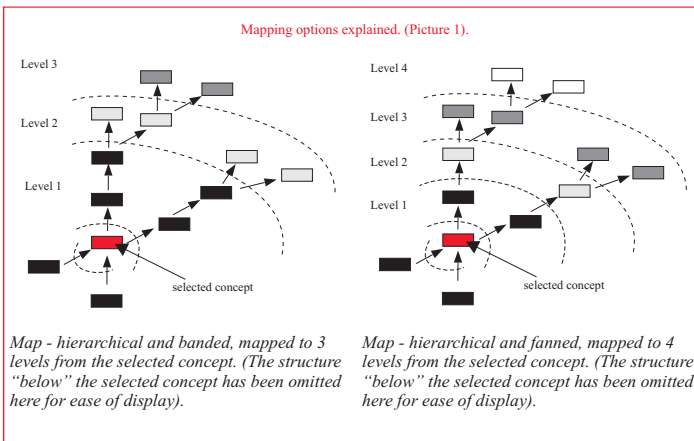
The command **nopassword** disables the password system and can only be used when logged in as supervisor. When password protection has been enabled and passwords set up, users must log into the model in order to be able to add/edit concepts. The command **login <password>** gives the user access to the model. The command **logout** returns the model to the standard level of access (which will usually be “ReadOnly” or “None”).

We must stress that password protection is **NOT** a failsafe security device. Even when the level of access is “None”, there are still other means by which the contents of a password protected model can be extracted, if the user has the technical know-how. So, please do not use the password system for highly confidential models.

And finally, do not forget that you and your colleagues should be using Decision Explorer version 3.1.2 if you want to make full use of the password protection system. The Help menu, About item in Decision Explorer tells you which version of the software you are using.



# Mapping options explained



The map options dialog (accessed via the Analysis menu, Mapping Options item) controls what is displayed and how it is displayed when you ask Decision Explorer to produce a map. This dialog influences the MAP command (used from the command line), the MAP CONCEPT item in the analysis menu and the ALT+M key combination.

If more than one concept is selected when you issue the map command, Decision Explorer will use only those concepts that are selected in the model. For example, if you select several concepts and use the command MAP SC (which stands for "map selected concepts"), then Decision Explorer will produce a map based only on the selected concepts. Similarly if you used the command MAP 22#25#26, Decision Explorer will produce a map which displays only concepts 22, 25 and 26.

However, if you have only one concept selected (for example, the concept represented by the red box in the picture 1 above), Decision Explorer will map the selected concept and other linked concepts as determined by the options which have been set in the map options dialog.

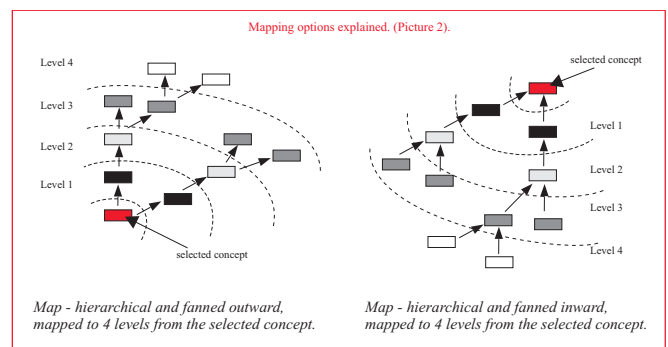
The same number of concepts are shown in each of the two diagrams in picture 1, above. The diagram on the left shows concepts which have been mapped using the banded option, to three levels. The diagram on the right shows concepts which have been mapped using the fanned option, to four levels. The dotted lines shown the boundaries between the levels. These mapping options give you flexibility in the way that your maps are displayed and the number of concepts that are included in your maps. If you understand how these options work then you can control how much and which information is brought onto the screen when you display a map.

The banded option works as follows, Decision Explorer tracks up (and down) from the selected concept until it reaches a branch point (a concept with three or more links). At each branch point one level (band) ends and another begins. So, working out from the selected (red) concept, the first level includes all of the black concepts, the second includes all of the light grey concepts and so on. A new level (band) starts on each line of argument when a branch point is reached.

The fanned option is a simple, step-wise division from one concept to the next, so the divisions between the levels occur between each subsequent concept along the lines of argument.

The number of levels to which any map option is shown is also controlled by the map options dialog. The default is 2 levels, but you may specify anything from 1 to 10 levels. However, in mapping to 10 levels in a large, complex model you may find that you reach the limit of the display capabilities of your screen.

As well as the main fanned map option (which maps concepts both "above" (outward) from the selected concept and "below" (inward) to the selected concept), two other options exist. These are the "fanned outward" and "fanned inward" options. In picture 2, the diagram on the left shows the fanned outward option. Only concepts which represent consequences of the selected concept are mapped. The diagram on the right shows the fanned inward option. Only concepts which represent supporting argument or explanations of the selected concept are mapped.



## Feedback

We very much welcome comments from readers, news of publications, suggestions about articles that you would like to see in this newsletter and any articles that you would like to submit for publication.

If you have any suggestions or would like to contribute an article then please contact Jenny Brightman, at Banxia Software Ltd, by telephone on +44 (0) 870 787 2994 or by email to [news@banxia.com](mailto:news@banxia.com). Thank you.

## Impact Explorer

We are pleased to announce that Impact Explorer has now been released. This new piece of software is aimed at risk assessment/ voting applications, for use by groups in a facilitated workshop setting. Impact Explorer allows you to vote on ideas in various ways and to display comparison matrices. The comparison matrices have a number of pre-set options, such as probability vs impact, cost vs benefit, risk vs reward, but they can also be customised. You can, if you wish, use Decision Explorer's DDE (dynamic data exchange) capabilities to exchange information with Impact Explorer, but you do not have to have both tools, each is a stand alone application. Details can be found on our web pages at [www.banxia.com/impact/index.html](http://www.banxia.com/impact/index.html).

## Events and training courses

If you would like more information about any of the events listed below, please contact either ourselves (Banxia Software Ltd) or the appropriate event organiser. If you are not sure who is the right person to contact, then please just call us or email to [training@banxia.com](mailto:training@banxia.com), we will be able to help you. Please check our web pages for the most up to date information.

**Monday 26th June. London, UK.**

### **Advanced Decision Explorer Workshop.**

One-day workshop, tutored by Dr. Fran Ackermann, concentrating less on the mechanics of using Decision Explorer and more on the wider picture of how you would use Decision Explorer and cognitive mapping in a workshop setting, as part of a decision support intervention.

**Monday 3rd - 6th July. London, UK.**

### **GDN 2000 (Group Decision and Negotiation).**

GDN 2000 is a meeting sponsored by the INFORMS Section on Group Decision and Negotiation. It will be held at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland. Come and talk to us on our stand at GDN 2000. For further information about the conference please visit <http://www.cbe.wvu.edu/gdn/GDN2000.html>.

**Tuesday 12th - Thursday 14th September. Swanswa, UK.**

Operational Research Society Conference. Come and talk to us at the OR conference. We will be on a stand with Scolari, Sage Publications Software, one of our software resellers.

**Thursday 28th September. London, UK.**

### **Commercial users "Come & See" day.**

A free event for an invited audience of managers and management consultants. Three short sessions repeated throughout the day, where practitioners are invited to come and talk about and try out Decision Explorer.

**Friday 29th September. London, UK.**

### **Academics "Come & See" day.**

A free event for an audience of lecturers, research students and researchers. Two sessions, repeated during the day, where you are invited to come and talk about and try out Decision Explorer.

**Friday 29th & Saturday 30th September. London, UK.**

### **Strategies in Qualitative Research : Issues & results from analysis using QSR NVivo & NUD\*IST**

The second international conference bringing together researchers conducting qualitative projects or teaching with QSR NVivo & NUD\*IST. Sessions will deal with research issues and outcomes from analysis using QSR NUD\*IST and

NVivo . For further information about the conference please visit the Institute of Education web site at [http://www.ioe.ac.uk/conference\\_news/Codiary.htm#Strategies](http://www.ioe.ac.uk/conference_news/Codiary.htm#Strategies).

**Monday 16th October. London, UK**

### **An Introduction to Decision Explorer.**

One-day, hands-on workshop run by SdG Associates, taking you through the theory and practice of cognitive/ ideas mapping and the use of Decision Explorer.

**October/ November 2000. Hoofddorp (near Amsterdam), Netherlands. (Date to be confirmed).**

### **Commercial users "Come & See" day.**

A free event for an invited audience of managers and management consultants. Three short sessions repeated throughout the day, where practitioners are invited to come and talk about and try out Decision Explorer.

**Monday 13th November 2000. Boston, MA, USA.**

### **An Introduction to Decision Explorer.**

One-day, hands-on workshop run by SdG Associates, taking you through the theory and practice of cognitive/ ideas mapping and the use of Decision Explorer.

**Thursday 30th November. London, UK.**

### **Academics "Come & See" day.**

A free event for an audience of lecturers, research students and researchers. Three short sessions, repeated throughout the day, where you are invited to come and talk about and try out Decision Explorer.

**Friday 1st December. London, UK.**

### **Commercial users "Come & See" day.**

A free event for an invited audience of managers and management consultants. Three short sessions repeated throughout the day, where practitioners are invited to come and talk about and try out Decision Explorer.

**Monday 11th December 2000. London, UK.**

### **An Introduction to Decision Explorer.**

One-day, hands-on workshop run by SdG Associates, taking you through the theory and practice of cognitive/ ideas mapping and the use of Decision Explorer.

## Reseller contact details

If this newsletter has been set to you by one of our resellers, their contact details will appear below, otherwise the space below will be left blank. If you are in any doubt as to who to contact or who your local reseller is (if one exists), then please contact Banxia or visit our web pages.

Reseller contact details:

## Training contacts

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