

A Day in the Life of the Image Activator

as recounted to Stanley Rabinowitz on 7-Jan-1985



MONITOR: Good morning sir! I am your command language interpreter today. That was a flawlessly executed LOGIN. How may I help you today?

USER: Good morning to you too computer. I think today I want to do some data retrieving.

MONITOR: A wonderful choice sir! A finer day it couldn't be for looking over your data. How will you have it today? Sunny side up? Once over lightly?

USER: I think I'll use DATATRIEVE. Would you kindly activate DATATRIEVE please?

MONITOR: Most certainly sir! An excellent choice! One moment while I image-activate it.

MONITOR: Oh, image activator: would you please image-activate that DTR32 image that I notice on SYS\$SYSTEM? My user desires to play with it a bit now.

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: No problem. Shouldn't take but a jiff.

<pause>

MONITOR: Any problems?

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: No sir, not a one. It's just that I'm surprised to see that DTR32 is composed of 21 image sections. Quite an unusual number for a VMS utility. Most images only have 3 or 4 sections. This one really sets a record! But no problem - I just \love/ to map in all these sections. After all - that's my primary purpose in life.

<pause>

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Well, that should do it. They're all mapped in.

MONITOR: Then we can start her up now?

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Well not quite. I just noticed that this image invokes some shared images. Oh well, I guess I'll have to go image-activate them too. At least we'll only have to activate those images that this program really needs.

MONITOR: How many shared images does it require?

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Oh mi gosh! It references 15 shared images! Another record! I can't believe it! Oh well, here goes...

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: The first one it wants is DTRSHR. That should be an easy one.

<pause>

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Oh no! Not another one. That's two in one day! DTRSHR.EXE uses 20 image sections!

MONITOR: Have you enough room for them all?

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: No sweat. This is a virtual memory machine. And this disk I/O is real fast. I'll have it in a minute.

<pause>

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: There. Now on to the other shared images. Next comes CDDSHR. Guess it's important that we share all this data.

MONITOR: Yup. What next?

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Now we'll need a database manager, so I guess we'll just have to go off and image-activate DBMSHR, the database management system.

MONITOR: Sounds reasonable.

USER: How's it coming there computer?

MONITOR: No sweat. It'll be just another moment.

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: And now we'll activate RDBSHR.

MONITOR: But I thought you just brought in your database manager?

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Yes, but this one is the \relational/ database system.
It's a whole different ballgame.

MONITOR: Well, hurry it along.

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Okay. Next comes RDMSHR, the relational database manager.

MONITOR: But how does that differ from RDBSHR?

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: I don't know. I just activate 'em. They tell me to image-act and I image-act.

MONITOR: Well, I hope that's it for database managers.

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Not quite. There's still RDBBSHR. This company specializes in its excellent collection of managers.

MONITOR: Great! I guess that's it then.

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Not on your life! Do you think our user merely wants to look at relationships? What if he wants to sort his data?

MONITOR: Oh.

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Didn't think of that did you? I guess we'll just have to go image-activate SORTSHR.

MONITOR: I guess so.

USER: But I don't plan to do any sorting today.
I just wanted to prepare a short report.

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Sorry. SORTSHR comes with this image.
It's a free option.

MONITOR: What next?

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Hmm. Looks like a request to bring in COBRTL,
the COBOL run-time library.

MONITOR: Why would they want that? Is DATATRIEVE written in COBOL?

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: No, but the COBOL run time library has many precious gems of useful routines that one might wish to call...
Guess, I'll just go image-activate it now.

MONITOR: Good thing you don't also need the FORTRAN run-time library too.

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Now you've done it! You've given me the evil eye. Either that or I just got up out of the wrong side of the bed this morning. Here look at this: this image is also requesting FORRTL and LIBRTL. OH! and now look: It wants MTHRTL too!

MONITOR: You never know when our user might want to do some computation. He might need to compute some arc cosines you know. Better safe than sorry.

USER: What's taking so long?

MONITOR: (still trying to be pleasant) We're almost there now. Shant be much longer. After all, you want a user-friendly system don't you?

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: That's right. I guess that's why I've been instructed to image activate LBRSHR. You never know when the user might request some on-line help so we've got to have our librarian ready to answer his questions.

MONITOR: That's nice. I'm sure our user will appreciate that.

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: And oh yeah - we'll need SCRSHR too, the screen package. Only the best on \this/ system. Can't let our user make do without fancy graphics!

MONITOR: A wonderful thought. But will SCRSHR be enough?

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: No. you're right of course. We'll also have to bring in EDTSHR. SCRSHR is only the low level graphics. EDTSHR will really let our user edit his data in style.

USER: But I wasn't planning to change the data today. Just one simple report...

MONITOR: Keep your shirt on. When this image finally comes up, it will really blow your mind.

MONITOR: But image activator, will EDTSHR really be enough? Isn't the big thing these days forms?

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Right you are monitor, baby. Guess we'll need FDVSHR, the forms management system. Won't take but another moment. (sigh) I think that was the last one.

MONITOR: Great! Then I can report back that we're ready to go?

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: One second. Let me make one last check...

MONITOR: Never pays to be hasty.

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Ah nuts! Some of these new images that we just activated are requesting further attention. It looks like they too want to activate other shared images.

MONITOR: Don't we have enough images? That's been 16 already!

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Well, security is an important issue too. Wouldn't want our user to lose any data. Look here: CDDSHR wants us to bring in SECURESHR. Guess I'll just have to image-activate another one...

USER: (getting impatient) What's taking so long?

MONITOR: We're putting all the pieces together for you now. Shouldn't be much longer.

USER: Putting them together? Doesn't it come all assembled?

MONITOR: Not to worry. There's no extra charge for installation.

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: There. And now what? Look at this: CDDSHR also wants us to activate LIBRTL, the common run-time library.

MONITOR: But didn't you already activate LIBRTL?

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Right on baby! Let me just look around.

<pause>

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Oh there it is. We have it mapped into memory already. I guess I'll just throw this request away.

MONITOR: Do you get many of these redundant requests?

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Yeah, they happen all the time. Nothing to worry about. You get used to it. Look here, SCRSHR wants LIBRTL too; and so does SORTSHR, and COBRTL, and FORRTL, and ...

MONITOR: Well hurry it along please.

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: ... and FDVSHR and MTHRTL and ... Oh and look at this duplicate request for LBRSHR and RDMSHR and RDBBSHR and VMSRTL and ...

MONITOR: VMSRTL? I don't remember seeing that one before.
What is it and who wants it?

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Oops, you're right. I almost overlooked this request
by RDBSHR. It's easy to overlook this one; it's so
small. Only contains a few transfer vectors...

MONITOR: Guess it should be easy to activate then?

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: On the contrary. This one attempts to activate
the entire RTL! Imagine that. Oh well. That's life.
Fortunately, I've already brought in most of the RTL.
Let's see now, what else will we need? Oh yes,
BASRTL. Can't imagine how we overlooked that one.

MONITOR: Is that it then?

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Yup. That's it. She's all here. You can go start
her up!

USER: (pounding on keyboard) Where's my data!

MONITOR: Please use voice input sir! Those CTRL/T's are
MOST annoying. They cause the most insidious
asynchronous traps to interrupt what I'm trying
to do. We're starting your image now.

USER: It's about time.

MONITOR: There. How's that? Lovely data isn't it?

USER: I wouldn't know. Where's my prompt?

MONITOR: I don't know. Let me look into it.

MONITOR: Control unit, where's his prompt?

CONTROL UNIT: We're executing instructions as fast as we can!
Oh my god! An exception!

MONITOR: An exception! Is that serious?

CONTROL UNIT: My mistake; it's not a hardware exception, it's merely
a software exception. Looks like the program signalled.

MONITOR: Why'd it do that?

CONTROL UNIT: Well, this program is naturally user friendly, so it
wants to start up by printing a welcome message
on the terminal.

MONITOR: So why doesn't it do that?

CONTROL UNIT: Well the message is in a message file, sir.

MONITOR: Well get it!

CONTROL UNIT: That's what we're trying to do. You'll have to check with the system message handling facility. It takes care of those things.

SYSTEM: Ah, I have the message request now. I'll have the message in a moment.

MONITOR: Well, how do you get it?

SYSTEM: No sweat, we'll just image activate the appropriate message section.

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Oh no. I thought I had a deserved rest coming.

SYSTEM: Sorry, just a little bit longer.

USER: WHERE'S MY PROMPT!!!!

MONITOR: Keep your pants on. Just be glad you're not trying to activate any subprocesses.

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Okay, one last time. Which message section do you need activated?

SYSTEM: I'm not sure. Let's try DBMMSG. DBMSHR alerted us to this one.

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: (struggling) Okay. There it is. I've image-activated DBMMSG.

SYSTEM: Sorry. It wasn't in that one. Try CDDSHR's message section, CDDEXC. Maybe it's in there.

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Okay. (grumble)

SYSTEM: Nope. It wasn't there either. Try RDMSMSG.

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Look. I'm getting tired of this. Couldn't you just give me the complete list of message sections to activate? I'll keep bringing them in until we find that damn message. Exactly what message are we looking for?

SYSTEM: Not sure yet, all I have is a number, but it's probably something like "Welcome to VAX DATATRIEVE".

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Well...

SYSTEM: Well what?

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: That list of message sections...

SYSTEM: Oh yeah. Well RDBSHR wants RDBMSGs, and not to be outdone, RDBBSHR wants RDBBMSGs, not to be confused with RDBMSGs, and DTRSHR wants DTRMSGs, and SORTSHR wants SHRIMGMSG, and lots of other guys are asking for SHRIMGMSG also - but I'm too smart for them. I'll just get it once and no one will ever know the difference.

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Working...

SYSTEM: And don't forget FDVMSG. The message might be in there too.

MONITOR: OH NO!

SYSTEM: What is it?

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Are you all right?

MONITOR: An interrupt!

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: An interrupt?

MONITOR: That's what I said, an interrupt.
Image activator: stop what you're doing.

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Why? Just when I was getting the hang of it.

MONITOR: The user has typed CTRL/Y.

IMAGE ACTIVATOR: Okay, everything has been suspended. Can I go to sleep now?

MONITOR: No, you better stick around in case the user wants to continue. And notify the exit routines to stand by. And the rundown procedures. Also, I need moral support. Maybe if I flash a dollar sign in front of his eyes, he'll stop looking so angry.

USER: Computer, I'm really getting tired of this.

MONITOR: But we were so close...

USER: A likely story.

MONITOR: Well what can I do for you instead?

USER: I still want my report. Let's try some other way of retrieving my data.

MONITOR: A wonderful idea sir! A finer day it couldn't be for looking over your data. How will you have it today? Sunny side up? Once over lightly?

USER: How about SCRAMBLED?

MONITOR: No problem sir. Wait one moment while I activate ENCRYPTSHR...

the curtain falls as the dance begins again...

The players:

DTR32	VAX DTR V3.1
DTRSHR	VAX DTR V3.1
CDDSHR	CDD T3.1-0
DBMSHR	VAX DBMS V2.2-3
RDBSHR	03-06
RDMSHR	Rdb/VMS T1.1
RDBBSHR	03-05 also known as RDBBSTUB
SORTSHR	V04-000
COBRTL	V04-000
FORRTL	V04-000
LIBRTL	V04-000
MTHRTL	V04-000
FDVSHR	FMS V2.2
LBRSHR	V04-000
SCRSHR	V04-000
EDTSHR	V04-000
SECURESHR	V04-000
VMSRTL	V04-000
BASRTL	V04-000
DTRMSG	03-05
CDDEXC	CDD T3.1-0
DBMMSG	03-03
RDMSMSG	03-05
RDBMSG	03-06
RDBBMSG	03-05
SHRIMGMSG	V04-000
FDVMSG	V2.1-003

for a grand total of 27 shared images and 153 image sections.

THE END