NAME

form − form letter generator

SYNOPSIS

form proto arg ...

DESCRIPTION

Form generates a form letter from a prototype letter, an associative memory, arguments and in a special case, the current date.

If *form* is invoked with the *proto* argument *x*, the associative memory is searched for an entry with name *x* and the contents filed under that name are used as the prototype. If the search fails, the message '[*x*]:' is typed on the console and whatever text is typed in from the console, terminated by two new lines, is used as the prototype. If the prototype argument is missing, '{letter}' is assumed.

Basically, *form* is a copy process from the prototype to the output file. If an element of the form [*n*] (where *n* is a digit from 1 to 9) is encountered, the *n*-th *arg* is inserted in its place, and that argument is then rescanned. If [0] is encountered, the current date is inserted. If the desired argument has not been given, a message of the form '[*n*]:' is typed. The response typed in then is used for that argument.

If an element of the form [*name*] or {*name*} is encountered, the *name* is looked up in the associative memory. If it is found, the contents of the memory under this *name* replaces the original element (again rescanned). If the *name* is not found, a message of the form '[*name*]:' is typed. The response typed in is used for that element. The response is entered in the memory under the name if the name is enclosed in [ ]. The response is not entered in the memory but is remembered for the duration of the letter if the name is enclosed in {}. Brackets and braces may be nested.

In both of the above cases, the response is typed in by entering arbitrary text terminated by two new lines. Only the first of the two new lines is passed with the text.

If one of the special characters [{]}\ is preceded by a \, it loses its special character.

If a file named 'forma' already exists in the user's directory, 'formb' is used as the output file and so forth to 'formz'.

The file 'form.m' is created if none exists. Because form.m is operated on by the disc allocator, it should only be changed by using *fed,* the form letter editor, or *form.*

FILES

form.m   associative memory
form?   output file (read only)

SEE ALSO

fed (VI), roff (I)

BUGS

An unbalanced] or } acts as an end of file but may add a few strange entries to the associative memory.