PART A:

USER GUIDE

There are eight chapters in the USER GUIDE. The first three chapters are intended primarily as a novice's introduction to the basics in producing DASH tables, while the remaining chapters are relevant to all users. The chapters are sequenced in the order of the steps necessary to produce tables, with each chapter building on the previous one.

***Chapter 1, INTRODUCTION**, is an initial look at the concepts used in DASH for tabulating as well as the context in which this application functions.*

***Chapter 2, LIBRARIES**, describes the storage mechanism for variables in DASH.*

***Chapter 3, VARIABLES**, reviews the basic techniques for creating variables.*

The next four chapters deal with the specific types of variables:

***Chapter 4: COLUMN VARIABLES** ("banners")*

***Chapter 5: ROW VARIABLES** ("stubs")*

***Chapter 6: PAGE TEMPLATE VARIABLES** ("headers" and "footers")*

***Chapter 7, SAMPLE APPLICATIONS**, reviews techniques for designing variables to handle selected research requirements.*

***Chapter 8, TABLES**, covers the three options for executing tables from the variables that have been set up.*

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

All options for generating tables originate from the TABLE GENERATION menu, which is accessed via the MASTER MENU.

The first option on the TABLE GENERATION menu is DASH TABULATIONS, where the process of creating tables always starts. This set of programs is self-contained and includes components for all table execution operations, so that users may work exclusively within DASH TABULATIONS.

Several menus on the TABLE GENERATION menu use the word "report". A report form is one of the optional mechanisms for executing a set of tables; it provides maximum flexibility for producing tables with varying presentation formats, filters, weights, and even data files. The stages of report form execution begin with SET UP REPORT, followed by TEST REPORT, then RUN REPORT and REPRINT REPORT; also available are ADD TO REPORT and ADD FILES TO REPORT for combining tables from two or more files.

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                TABLE GENERATION


    █  SELECT OPTION


    1  DASH TABULATIONS

    2  SETUP REPORT FORM
    3  TARGET WEIGHTING

    4  TEST REPORT
    5  RUN REPORT
    6  ADD TO REPORT
    7  ADD FILES TO REPORT

    8  REPRINT REPORT
    9  PRINT TABLE OF CONTENTS
    0  CHANGE REPORT PARAMETERS



                              F1 help  Page Down
```
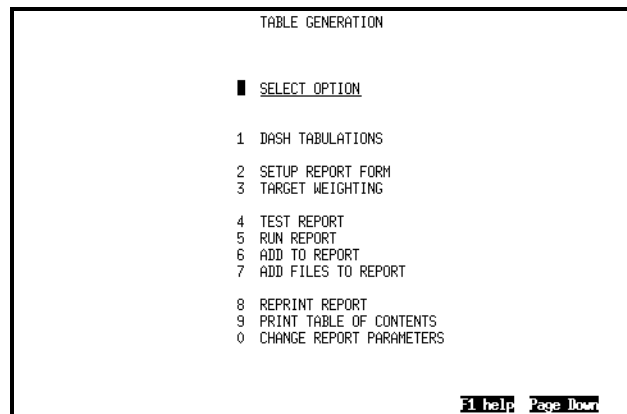Figure 1.1: TABLE GENERATION Menu

Also on the TABLE GENERATION menu is one of the DASH options to create weights -- TARGET WEIGHTING -- and a final choice, CHANGE REPORT PARAMETERS, which controls the default presentation formats for tables produced from each report form.

A "help" page is available for each menu page. Use the Help function key to access this information from any menu, then Page Down to return to the menu.

THE CONCEPTS

The entire DASH system, including the tabulations component, is based on a single set of concepts. The terminology and techniques used in creating data entry forms and in completing menu requests is carried through into the tabulations portion of DASH. New concepts are those which apply uniquely to the tabulation application; some are standard in computer and/or tabulation software, others are unique. Below are the basic terms used in the process of creating tables in DASH and a brief definition of those concepts.

VARIABLES

All text and data specifications which appear in tables are set up in variables. There are three types of DASH variables, and all requirements for combining, presenting and controlling data output are handled within each type of variable:

■ Row Variable   for use as a table *stub*. Typically, a row variable itemizes responses to each questionnaire item.

■ Column Variable   for use as a table *banner*. Typically, a column variable consists of demographic or psychographic information or important survey summary data.

■ Page Template   for use as a *header* and/or a *footer*. Typically, a header and
  Variable   a footer include the study title, company identification, date, page and table numbering, and any other standard information that is to frame each page of table output

LIBRARY

Each variable created in DASH is stored in a library. A single library may contain any number of variables of all three types (row, column and page template variables) from one to many survey forms. Any number of separate libraries may co-exist on the same computer disk.

TABULATIONS

When each data value of a row variable is listed in a single column independently of any other variable, the result is called a *single* or *simple tabulation*. When each data value of the row variable is further subdivided according to the data values of a column variable, the result is called a *cross-tabulation*.

TABLE CELLS

Each row of a single tabulation and each intersection of a row and a column variable comprises a table *cell*. Each table cell may include the following:

■ the *count*: the sum of the data values for all qualifying cases (respondents). By default, each case that qualifies for inclusion in a table cell counts "one" towards that cell; (an alternative counting mechanism may be specified).

■ *percents*:   the cell count may be expressed as a percent of the total *row* count, total *column* count, or total *table* count.

■ *statistics*: a mean, median, mode, standard deviation, standard error, minimum, maximum, range, and t-test may be in a cell.

BINS

A *bin* is a construct used in DASH for specifying the individual questionnaire responses and combination of responses to be tabulated. A bin in a row variable corresponds to a single row in table output. A bin in a column variable corresponds to a single column in table output. The result is that each table cell counts respondents who meet the "bin" specifications for both the row and column variables at this point of intersection.

DEFAULT PARAMETERS

All of the controls which determine the appearance of table output may be called the "presentation formats". Such format options in DASH include the dimensions of table components as well as the style for displaying output; for example, whether a percent calculation is an integer or a decimal, or whether the percent sign is included.

A series of standard formats, called the *default parameters*, are configured for each DASH installation to define all the formats preferred for general use at that site. This means that a table can be produced at any time without specifying any formats.

However, all presentation formats can be altered at any time. A variety of options allows changing the default parameters to meet the new needs of all surveys or just a unique single survey; supplementary tools extend the change alternatives to a set of tables, a single table, or even a single row within a table.

REPORT FORM

Single tabulations and cross-tabulations can be executed through a report form as well as through menus within a library. A report form is similar in construction to a data entry form, with free-format entry of components to display pages. However, report forms typically consist only of background commands, which identify the variables to be tabulated as well as any weights, filters, and changes to presentation parameters.

OTHER CONCEPTS

All of the other concepts used in DASH for executing tables are consistent with the procedures already described in the data entry form manual, including form "page" and "field" structures.

STEPS IN CREATING TABLES

1. CREATE OR IMPORT A DATA FILE

All tables refer to a DASH data file that is contained in a DASH form on the system disk. This data file may be created in either of two ways: by entering the data initially to a DASH entry form; or by loading an existing data file into a minimal DASH form created to mimic the structure of that file.

Survey data entered through a DASH entry form by interviewers (CATI) or data entry clerks (DDE) is ready immediately for tabulating. An optional data cleaning operation (DATA MANAGEMENT: CLEAN CASES) rechecks the data file for errors.

Data entered on a different computer to a different software package can be loaded into DASH for tabulating. The two operations involved are designing a DASH form with field structures to match a non-DASH data file, then loading this data file into DASH via a data import menu. For assistance in loading a file, refer to the menu "Help" pages on the DATA IMPORT menus.

Files that are loaded into DASH can be handled in the same way as original DASH data. Marginals, listings, access options, etc. can all be used in the same way. If the data file contains errors, add background commands to the form and run data cleaning before tabulations.

When tables must be assembled from data in several separate data files, it is not necessary to merge the files before executing tables. The report form mechanism includes an option which allows data from similar (but not necessarily identical) data files to be tabulated together; this is particularly suited for tracking and other multi-wave studies.

2. CREATE VARIABLES

All variables are created in DASH TABULATIONS, a series of menus accessed from the TABLE GENERATION menu.

Chapters 3 through 6 deal with the mechanics of setting up each type of variable. The basic concepts are introduced in Chapter 3, and specific implementations in column, row and page template variables are described in detail in chapters 4, 5 and 6 respectively. Sample applications follow in Chapter 7.

To create a variable, it is necessary to know the DASH form page and field location of each questionnaire item you wish to tabulate. There are two methods commonly used:

- print a copy of the DASH form (FORM CREATION: PRINT FORM with output to the printer), or

- send a copy of the DASH form to the file browser instead (FORM CREATION: PRINT FORM with output to the display). Page through this copy on the display while marking page and field references on the original paper copy of the questionnaire.

3. EXECUTE TABLES

Tables can be executed from the RUN TABLES and RUN TABLES - VARIABLE RANGE menu within DASH TABULATIONS as well as through a report form (TABLE GENERATION: SET UP REPORT etc.). There are specific purposes for each option:

- RUN TABLES menu: for one to eight individual tables; use to test variables at the early tabulation stage and to add extra tables after the main body of tables is finished.

- RUN TABLES - VARIABLE RANGE: for a complete table set consisting of all row variables within an alphanumeric range automatically tabbed against all banner variables within a different alphanumeric range; use for maximum speed of table production.

- report form; for any number of individually-specified tables; use for maximum flexibility in formatting, weighting, filtering, etc.

Weights and filters are options that may be applied to tables or to variables within tables; see the Output Guide chapter on Counts for additional information.

TABULATING DATA CONCURRENTLY WITH OTHER OPERATIONS

Every DASH operation can be classified as either "read" or "write". An operation which "reads" a file can look at its contents but not change them; an operation which "writes" to a file can change the contents of that file.

Within the tabulating process, there are both "read" and "write" operations. "Read" operations can operate concurrently with each other and with "write" operations on a single file, but "write" operations cannot operate concurrently with other "write" operations on the same file.

Variable set-up is a "write" operation; only one person can access any library at a time.

Table execution is a "read" process; that is, the data file is used but is not changed through a "write" procedure. Therefore, tables can be run simultaneously with other DASH operation, both "read" (eg. data summaries) and "write" (eg. data entry and cleaning). The exception is that report form tables cannot be executed when the library designated in that report form is open for use. Otherwise, if there is a data "write" operation underway when tables are executed, the variables and/or cases affected will still be included in the tables.