

## SignWriter® ColumnMaker

Converts Documents  
to Vertical Columns

**ColumnMaker** is an add-on program for the SignWriter Computer Program, version 4.4. It runs in MS-DOS. It is **designed for Postscript printers**. The files can be printed to disk as a Postscript file. The file can then be converted to Acrobat PDF.

When creating sign documents in SignWriter 4.4, the signs are typed horizontally from left to right on the screen, and they print horizontally as well. These sign documents are called **.SGN files** in SignWriter.

**ColumnMaker** takes an .SGN file and makes a copy, creating a new .SGN file that is **columnized**. A columnized file places the signs in vertical columns. So, after converting a file with ColumnMaker, you will have one "horizontal SGN file" and one "vertical SGN file", each with different names. In the vertical file, the same signs appear in three vertical columns, read from top to bottom, and left to right.

### To Install

To install **ColumnMaker** from a floppy disk, you need to know how to copy files in MS-DOS. If you do not know how to use MS-DOS, then **ask someone to help you**.

1. Be sure you are in MS-DOS, in your **SW** directory.
2. Put the **ColumnMaker** disk in the floppy disk drive.
3. Copy all the files from the **ColumnMaker** disk into the **SW** directory.  
These files include:

COL.EXE.....executive file that runs ColumnMaker

COL.TXT.....help document that can be opened with any word processor

SW.SYM.....symbol file

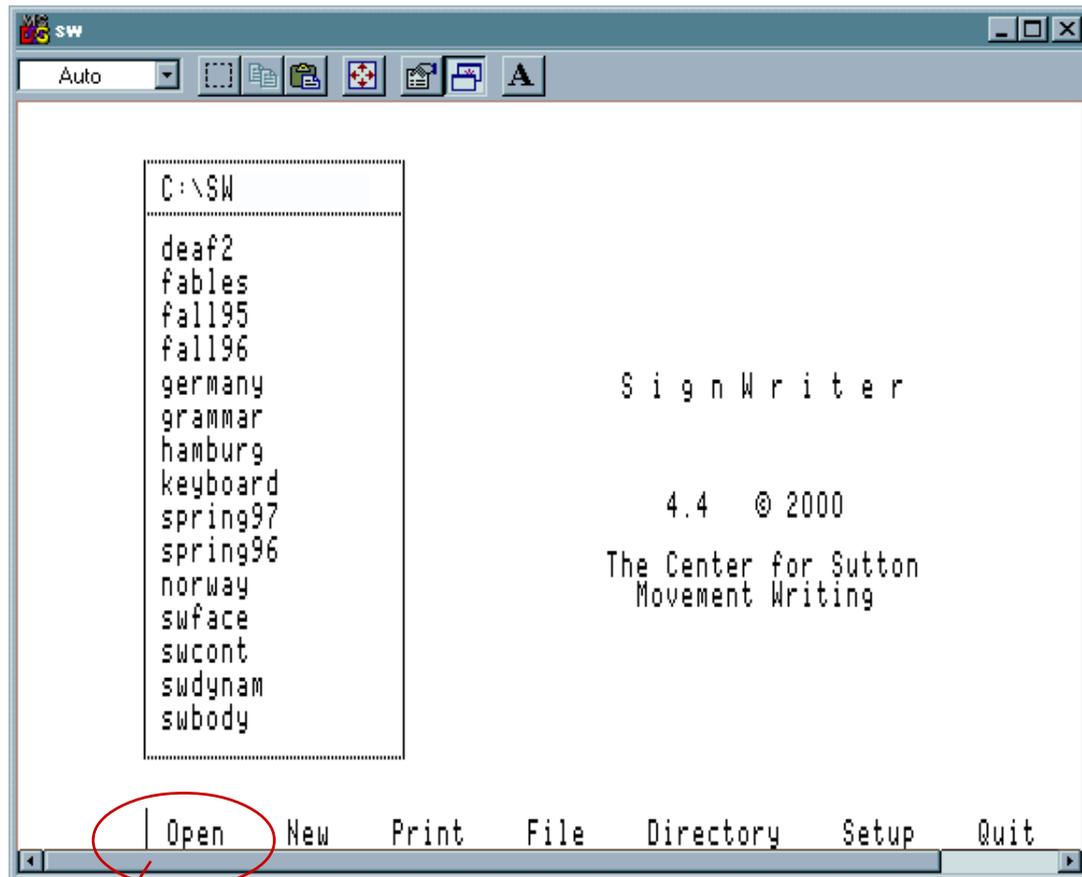
4. Eject the **ColumnMaker** disk.



## Check Width of Signs

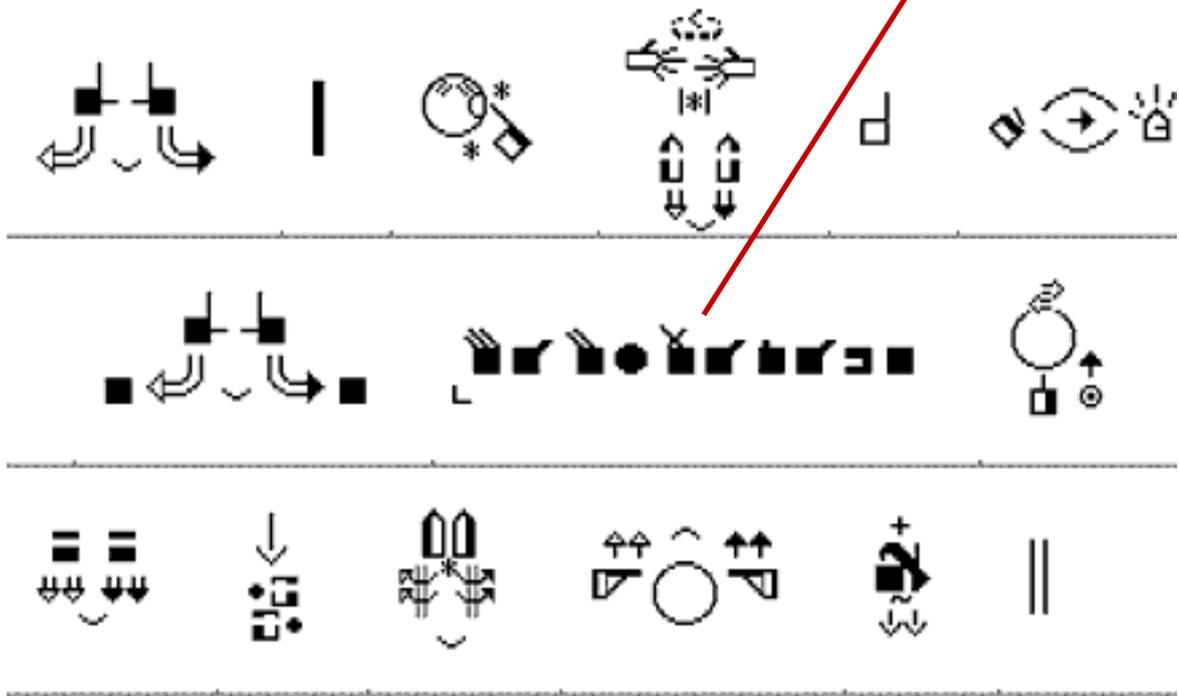
Before You Convert Files

1. Before you start **ColumnMaker**, you need to check to see if there are any signs that are "too wide". Signs that are "too wide" are often fingerspelling or paragraphs of words. The **ColumnMaker** program cannot columnize any fingerspelled word that is wider than eight fingerspelling characters.
2. Choose the horizontal file you wish to convert. Make a duplicate of the file. This is important, for backup purposes. Give the duplicate file a new name. It will be a temporary file used only for the conversion. Then start the SignWriter Program, and open this temporary file in SignWriter:

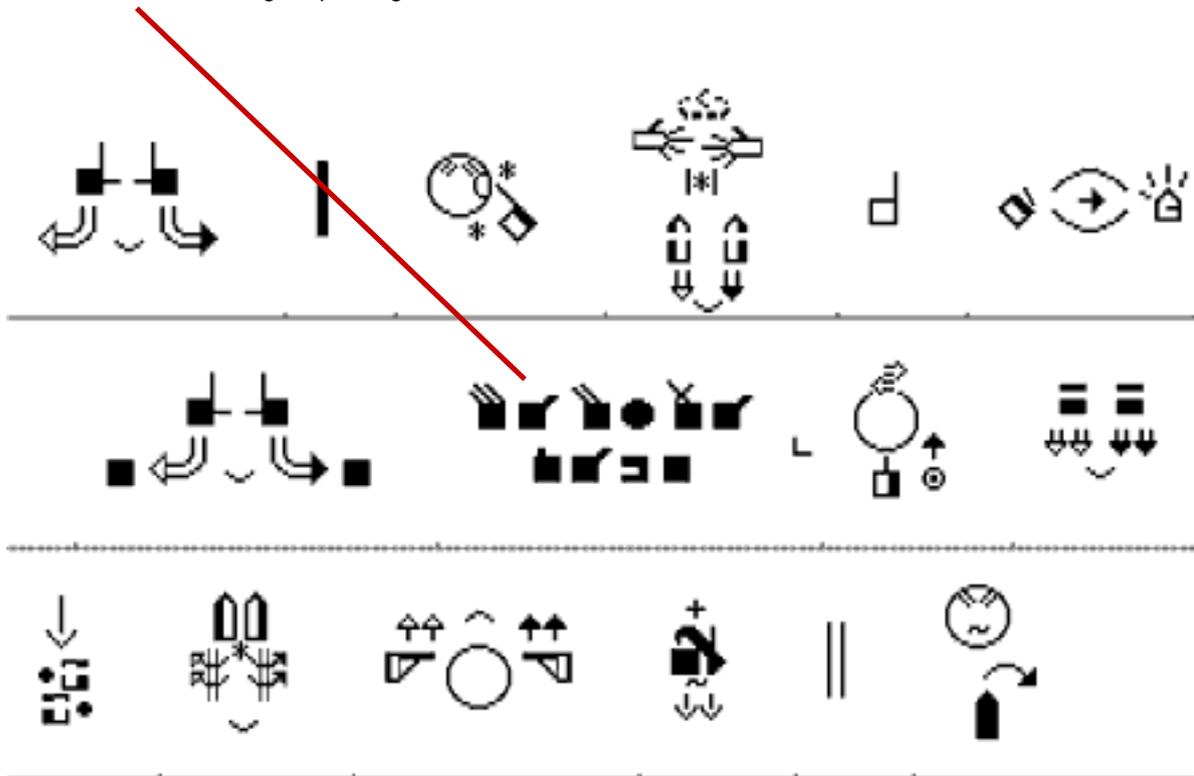


Open the temporary file in SignWriter. Type Alt-O to open a file.

3. Search through the file to find signs that are "too wide". Fingerspelling cannot be more than 8 characters wide. This fingerspelled word is too wide. It is 10 characters wide, instead of 8 or less.



4. Stack the fingerspelling so that it is not so wide. Then save the file.





## Choose Print Format

Before You Convert Files

1. Before you use **ColumnMaker**, you need to choose a "Print Format"

Open the SignWriter program. This command line appears:

```
| Open   New   Print   File   Directory   Setup   Quit
```

2. Print Formats are located under **Setup**. Type the **Alt** key plus **S** for **Setup**. This will appear:

```
Setup | Printing   Country   Dictionary
```

3. Choose **P** for **Printing**. This will appear:

```
Setup | Printer   Interface   Format   Numbers   Lines
```

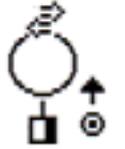
4. Choose **F** for **Format**. This will appear:

```
Setup | Page format code is 2.   New code: █
```

Type in the number of the Format you wish.  
Choose Formats 1-6. Press Return.

**See samples of the six Print Formats  
on the next six pages.**

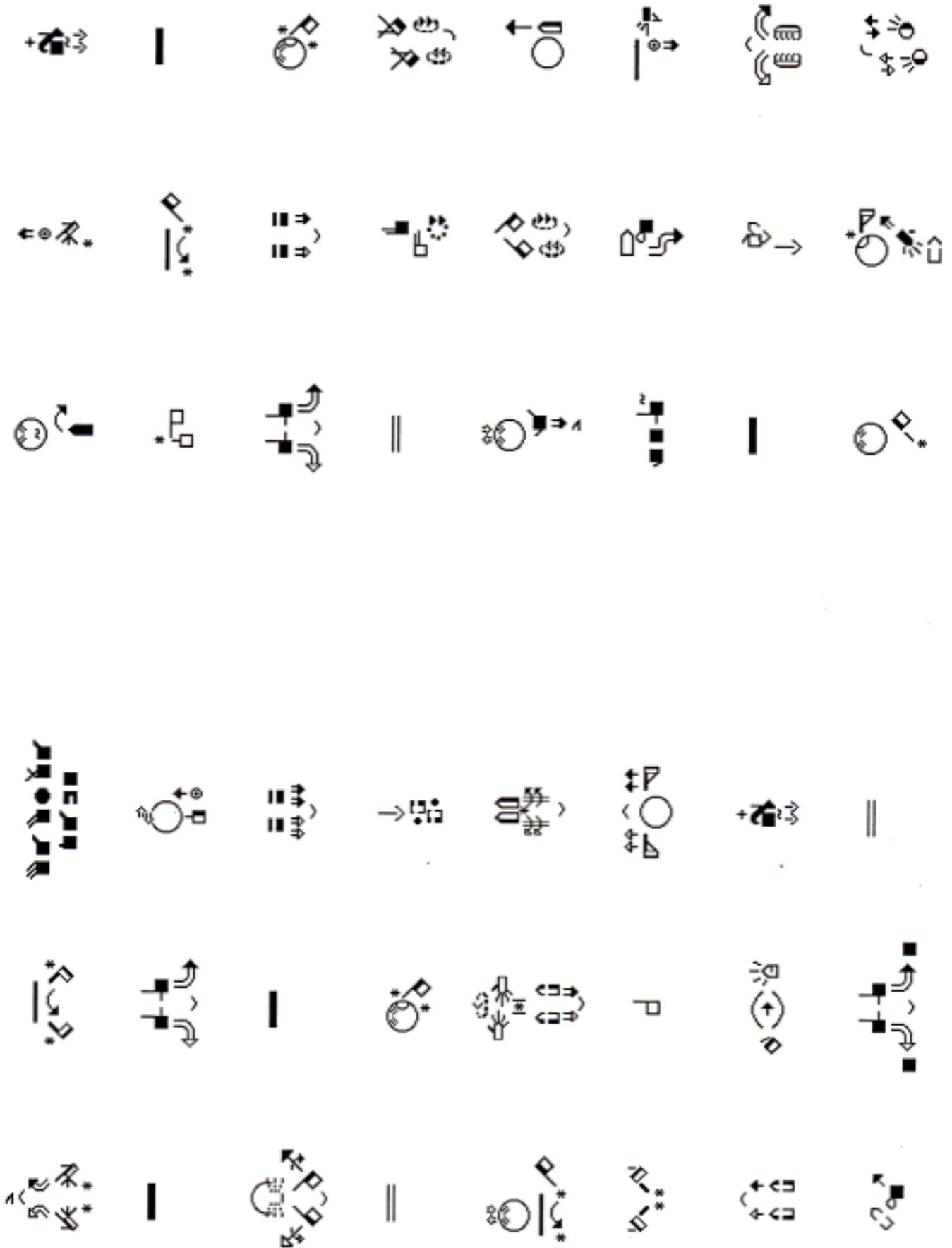
# Print Format 1



# Print Format 2



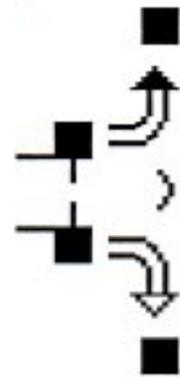
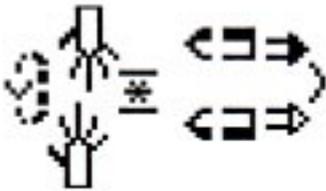
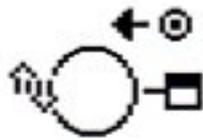
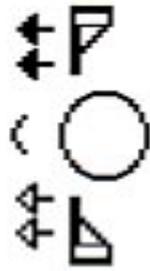
# Print Format 3

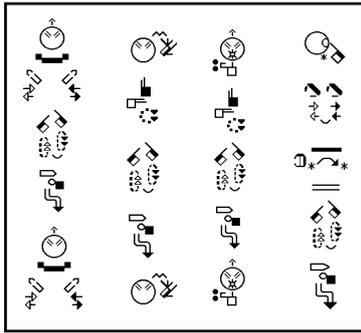






# Print Format 6





## Converting Files To Vertical Columns

Using ColumnMaker

1. Be sure you are in MS-DOS in the SW directory. Your screen should look like this:

```
C:\SW>_
```

2. To start **ColumnMaker**, type **col** at the C prompt:

```
C:\SW>col_
```

3. Then press the Return (or Enter) key. **ColumnMaker** opens on the screen, and asks what file you wish to convert?

```
C:\SW>col
```

```
SignWriter ColumnMaker 1.0
```

```
Convert what file to columns? _
```

4. Type in the name of the file you wish to "columnize".

```
C:\SW>col
```

```
SignWriter ColumnMaker 1.0
```

```
Convert what file to columns? deaf1_
```

5. Press the Return (or Enter) Key. **ColumnMaker** asks for a new name for the new "columnized file". Type in the name of the new file and press Return.

```
C:\SW>col
```

```
SignWriter ColumnMaker 1.0
```

```
Convert what file to columns? deaf1
```

```
Name of new file? deafcol_
```

6. **ColumnMaker** converts the file to columns. If all signs are the correct width, then the conversion is quick and simple. This will appear on your screen if the conversion is successful:

```
Making column file...
```

```
Column file completed.
```

```
C:\SW>_
```

You can now print out your file, as you do with all other files, by starting **SignWriter** and then pressing **Alt-P** for Print.



## Troubleshooting

Common Problems  
& Error Messages

### 1. "Column file not completed: sign too wide."

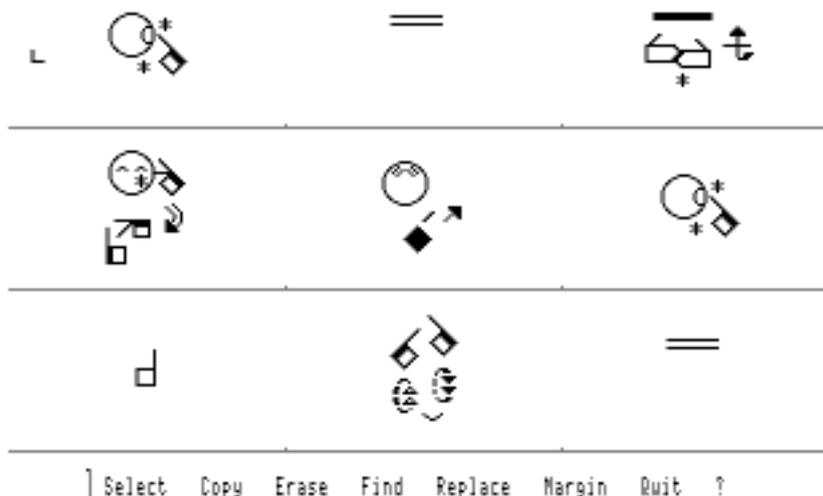
If you try to columnize a file with a sign that is too wide, this message will appear on your screen:

```
Convert what file to columns? deaf1
Name of new file? deafcol
Making column file...
Column file not completed: sign too wide. Press Return to finish.
```

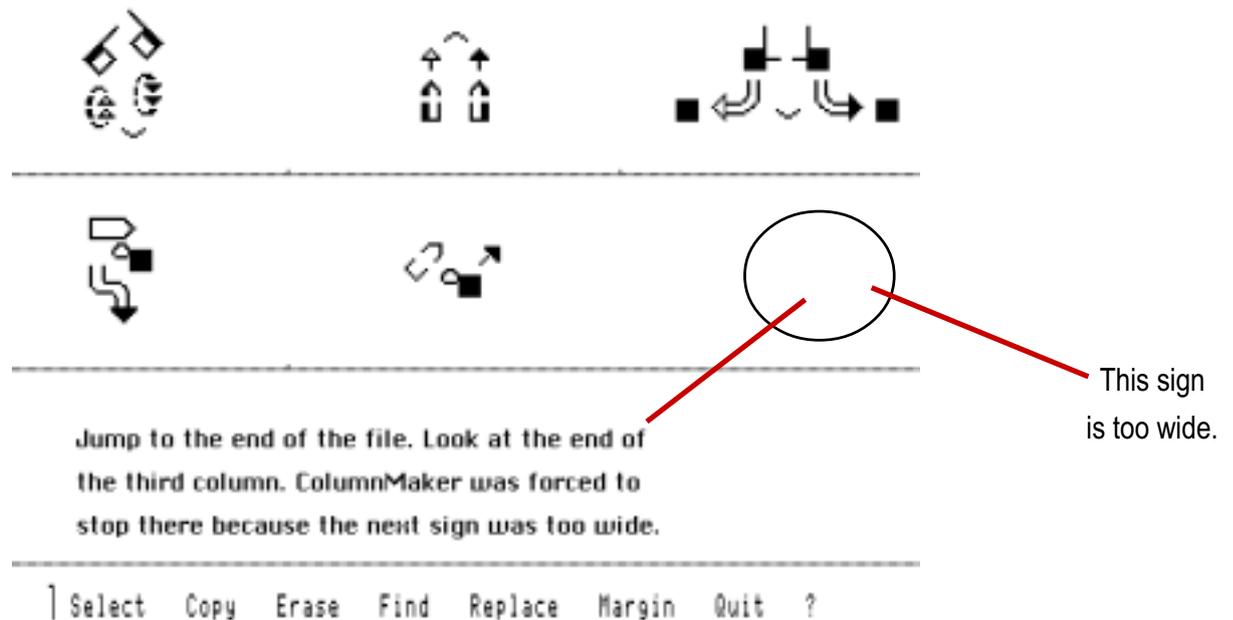
If you get this message, it means that **ColumnMaker** has created a "partially completed column file". The last sign in this "partial file" is the sign immediately before the sign that was too wide. To solve the problem:

a. Start **SignWriter** and open the "partial file".

You will see that the signs are now in three vertical columns:



b. Use the Jump Command to jump to the end of the document:



c. Make a mental note of where the "too wide" sign is located.

d. Close the "partial file" and delete it.

e. Open the original file. Find the sign that is too wide.

f. Change the sign to be less wide.

g. Re-columnize the file by using ColumnMaker.

## 2. "Does not work with SignWriter Print Format 7" ...or...

### "Does not work with my dot-matrix or ink-jet printer."

Vertical files only print with Print Formats 1-6, which are designed for postscript printers. Most laser printers are postscript printers. It is not recommended to print vertical files with other kinds of printers. Dot-matrix printers cannot use the Print Formats at all, and ink-jet printers may or may not work, depending on the model.

## 3. "Columns Hard To Read Or Edit On Screen"

It is not recommended that you edit or read vertical files on screen. Vertical files are really made to print-out and read on paper. It is best to make editing changes to the original horizontal file, and then use **ColumnMaker** to make a new vertical file. Why? Because the columns on screen are based on which Print Format you chose, and each Print Format places a different number of signs in each column. If you try to edit on screen, you may confuse the formatting without realizing it.

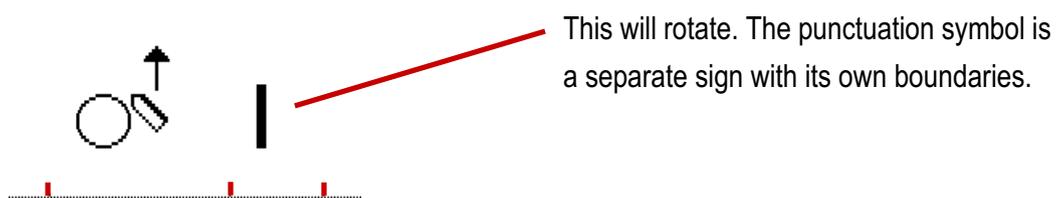
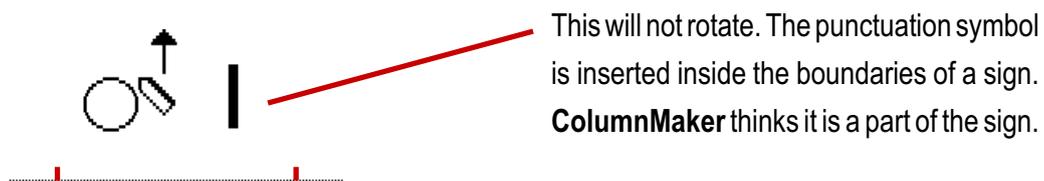
#### 4. "When I print, the signs are in the wrong columns!"

Before you use **ColumnMaker** to create a vertical file, you chose a Print Format. The file is created specifically for that one Print Format. If, by accident, you change the Print Format in SignWriter and then print the file, the signs will be "all mixed up" and the columns will be unreadable. Once you choose a Print Format, you have to stick to it!

If you want to use another Print Format you can, if you create a new file. Choose the Print Format you want, and then use **ColumnMaker** to create a new file based on that format. For more details, see page 4.

#### 5. "Why didn't my punctuation symbols rotate?"

**ColumnMaker** only rotates punctuation symbols if they appear by themselves as a "separate sign". If you entered them as a part of an existing sign, **ColumnMaker** will not change them. To rectify this problem, open the original horizontal file. Find the punctuation symbols. Look at the little marks that show you the beginning and end of each sign. You will need to edit the file so that all punctuation symbols are treated as separate signs:



#### 6. Full Technical Support

Please feel free to contact us with questions or bug reports!

**The DAC** • Deaf Action Committee For SignWriting  
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email: [DAC@SignWriting.org](mailto:DAC@SignWriting.org) • Web: [www.SignWriting.org](http://www.SignWriting.org)

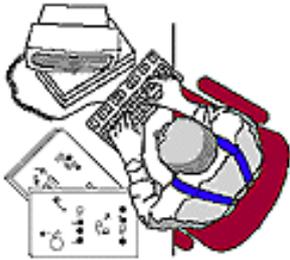
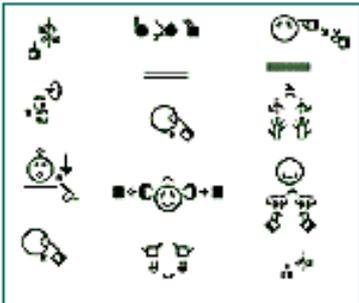
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