Print Solutions from Atac

More information at…

http://www.atac.com.au

Email David Kirk

or call +61 (419) 962 386

Barr Host Communications Suite

The Barr Host Communications Suite (BHCS) is the flagship Spooler product from Barr Systems Inc. based in Florida, USA. Barr's Spooler origins go way back to the DOS days of the 1980s when Barr managed to drive a 6250 SCSI tape unit and an S/370 Bus & Tag attached printer from a single PC, while simultaneously maintaining an SNA connection to a mainframe.

Clever memory management and unique time-slicing software seemed to embue the single-processor MS-DOS based systems of the 1980s with the ability to run multiple threads simultaneously. Barr's MS-DOS based Spooler software was truly cutting edge and achieved consistently and significantly faster transfer rates than any of the opposition.

When Windows came along, Barr migrated their software to the XP and Server 2003 platform with the release of the Barr Enterprise Print Server (BEPS) product. Windows removed any restrictions on the number of devices that could be attached; these were now only limited by the computer hardware.

BEPS grew as a product, with optional add-on modules available for RJE, NJE, TCP/IP, Tape, Bus & Tag and Escon connectivity, among others. Many hundreds of BEPS systems were placed throughout Australia, New Zealand and all of Asia by Atac. Distributors around the rest of the world saw the same growth pattern.

When Microsoft announced the end of life for Windows XP and Server 2003, it spelled the end of life for BEPS too. BEPS was 16-bit code with a lot of content ported from the DOS product; it needed a huge re-write to take advantage of newer 32 and 64-bit OS, and the newer in-built features the Windows environment provided to apps.

BHCS was in fact released before the XP and Server 2003 end of life date arrived. BHCS had support for all Windows OSs from Windows 7 up, both 32 and 64-bit. The look and feel of BHCS was intentionally unchanged from BEPS, allowing an easy migration with little training required. Under the bonnet however, most routines were heavily overhauled or completely re-written.

BHCS is without a doubt the most reliable and most used software Barr Systems has ever produced. Every day, BILLIONS of pages are processed through BHCS systems around the globe. Some of these systems run non-stop for years. There are still DOS systems out there which surface from time to time, testifying to the long-term reliability of the software.

BHCS is used by large multi-national corporate entities. It's used by "print shops". It's used when out-sourcing and when in-sourcing. BHCS can solve most print migration and distribution issues. The familiar Spool Window interface is well known to a large percentage of Print Operators around the world, so a rapid take-on with little retraining makes BHCS a very appealing proposition.

Contact Atac today to discuss your Print Management requirements.

Output Manager Professional Services

Output Manager (previously Emtex) is a print transformation package which transforms one print language to another. AFP, LCDS/Metacode, PCL, PDF and PS are transformed to one or more of AFP, LCDS/Metacode, PCL, PDF, PS, TIF, IJPDS and XML formats. With the optional Output Enrichment module (VDE), documents can be modified as they are transformed, in many different ways.

Using VDE, documents can be:

- merged
- consolidated
- sorted

- split
- bar-coded
- colourised
- indexed
- trans-promo'd via SQL lookup info
- etc., etc.

VDE is a full object-oriented programming language which allows you to:

- ADD
- DELETE
- INSERT
- ALIGN
- MOVE
- EXTRACT (usable text/data)
- FORMAT

individual document elements such as TEXT, IMAGES, LOGOs, FONTS and OVERLAYS.

Clearly this is a very powerful programming tool, which allows a print shop to differentiate themselves and offer true "value-add" services. VDE programmers are always busy, all of the time, and are in great demand!

Where demand exceeds supply, Atac can provide programming expertise with VDE Professional Services, on a variety of bases:

- Fixed-price quotes for jobs ranging from half a day plus.
- Time & Materials for smaller or ad-hoc jobs.
- Monthly (capped) allocations to allow rapid assistance with Proof of Concepts etc.
- Training in all aspects of OM & OE.

Contact Atac for help with your VDE programming needs.

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Print/Channel Architecture

The BARR/PRINT CHANNEL (PCS) module has been a standalone product for some time now. PCS supports Bus & Tag or Escon input. It emulates mainframe printers to the HOST. De-commission your expensive mainframe printers, install PCS configured at the same channel addresses as the printers, and continue printing from your HOST. All of this with no changes on the HOST.

The Spool Window's Channel Input Port utility is used to receive documents from PCS. PCS can be installed on the Barr Host Communications Server (BHCS) computer or a different computer.

This allows you two options when setting up a PCS machine:-

- You can install PCS on a PC with BHCS present so PCS feeds BHCS directly. PCS is always able to receive data because BHCS can always store it for later forwarding. As all files go through BHCS on the PCS machine, an extra layer of redundancy is provided in this "non-stop" configuration by the BHCS RETAIN feature.
- You can setup a "black box" PCS machine without BHCS, forwarding immediately to a remote BHCS PC. In this case, if the link to the remote BHCS is down for some reason, then PCS will stop receiving data from the HOST until such time as it is working again.

Barr's standalone Print Channel product can provide a less expensive alternative for channel extender replacement!

Contact Atac for more information.

Yes, but how fast is it?

We get asked this all the time. Here are a few facts relating to the SPEED of the products we sell, which you may not have known:

- In the early days, it was all about communications speed. While others were struggling to achieve 64kbps in 1980, Barr was hitting 2Mbps via V.35 connections.

- One of the first sites we setup in the early '80s comprised a Xerox 4050 and two Impact 5000 printers. We drove all three flat out with Barr via a 48kbps leased line. (That's a little "k".)
- Barr's ESCON channel hardware and software was claimed by IBM to be "… the fastest ESCON connection we've ever seen to a mainframe …" – that's on IBM's mainframe, at IBM's testing labs.
- A single Barr Print390 card can drive several large channel printers at total speeds approaching 1,000ipm; recent model PCs can be fitted with up to FOUR Print390 cards.
- There are no "throttling" restrictions in either Barr or Output Manager software; the faster the PC, the faster they'll run. That's good news with Moore's Law still holding…
- Barr was designed with no limitations at all in mind. Unlimited printers, unlimited spool files, unlimited file sizes, unlimited input directories, unlimited lpd queues etc. (The only limits are imposed by the hardware and operating system, such as screen real estate, processing power, disk size etc.)
- Output Manager scales to a full client-server setup, capable of driving multiple sites/printers. One site in USA drives over 100 production printers via Output Manager.
- Suggested speed for Output Manager to transform AFP and Xerox print streams is around 10,000ipm. However, one client processed **43,258 impressions in 59 seconds** on a current model Windows PC.

So when we get asked "Yes, but how fast is it?", we reply "Fast enough!"

Q & A

Q. Does Barr need to run on a server class machine?
A. No. Barr will run on Windows 7 and Windows 10 as well as Server 2008, Server 2012, Server 2016 and Windows Server 2019.

Q. How do I remove a leading JOG command in a print stream with Output Manager?
A. The profile command OFFSETJOB=NO will do this for you automatically.

Q. When I run a Barr Diagnostic, I always have trouble finding the directory where the snapshot is placed. Why is it done this way?
A. Barr actually places the BarrDiag.BCT file wherever your TEMP environment variable is pointing. This is something normally managed by Windows and is the target location for all temporary files from Windows applications. You can see this value by opening a CMD window and typing SET. A huge list of settings scrolls up and the TEMP directory will be in the list.

However, you don't need to record or type this info in; just choose START | RUN and type in %TEMP% and press Enter. (That's a percent sign, the word "temp" in upper or lower case, and another percent sign.) The percent signs tell Windows to substitute the full pathname for the TEMP variable. Windows will open an Explorer window pointing right at that dir. The BarrDiag.BCT file will always be found in the TEMP location. Too easy!

Feedback

Your feedback is valuable to Atac and helps us provide the high standard of service which you have come to expect from us, and which we are proud to deliver. Whether you have questions about our product range, a story to share regarding your experiences, or you would like to comment on our newsletter, just send us an **email**.

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