Print Solutions from Atac

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BHCS Requirements for "Lights-Out" Operation

Barr Systems' BHCS (Barr Host Communications Suite) is a Windows-based print spooler, used by big and small enterprises to receive print data from various "sources" and send same to various "destinations".

BHCS runs on Windows 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11 as well as Server 2008, 2012, 2016, 2019 and 2022, on physical or virtual computers, 32 or 64 bit. BHCS must be installed by a user with "Local Admin" Rights.

If BHCS is to interact with LAN sources and/or destinations, a username and password with LAN Permissions must be supplied during installation.

If BHCS is NOT to interact with LAN sources and/or destinations i.e. is running locally only, the "Local System" Account can be chosen during installation. This inbuilt Windows Account has (almost) full Rights to the local machine (and NO Rights to LAN and remote devices).

BHCS is Service-based. Services start when the computer starts, not when/if a user logs in. The User Account supplied at installation will start the BHCS Services and must have required Permissions to function.

Depending on the Licensed BHCS modules installed, required Permissions are as follows:

- Polling files in from LAN – Read, Write & Delete Permissions for the polled LAN locations
- Writing to LAN folders or printers – Write & Print Permissions for target LAN folders and printers
- Writing Accounting info to an external SQL database – SQL Login, Write & Read Permissions
- Email Notifications – Email Username & Password to send email
- Remote Spool Window access from other machines – BHCS internal User/Group Permissions to access Spool & Retain: Restore, Print, View, Delete etc as required (via BHCS utility UserRightsConfig)
- RJE & NJE modules will require Mainframe login and connection details, configured and supplied for you by the Mainframe Comms team

So, a User Account with Local Admin Rights and LAN Permissions can start the BHCS Services at PC startup and begin processing files in and out, without anybody actually logging in to the PC. A true "lights-out" installation can be achieved, with some simple workflow rules to assign input jobs to output devices.

BHCS is active at many sites in the capacity of a "lights-out" protocol converter i.e. Escon Channel to TCP/IP, Bus & Tag to TCP/IP etc. In these situations, a one-to-one mapping from input (channel address) to output (TCP/IP) is setup and has been known to run for years without human intervention.

BHCS software is FAST! Allow for rapid network connections and fast disks, to obtain optimised performance.

Contact Atac to discuss your current or proposed BHCS installation.

Output Manager Unattended Mode Operation

Output Manager is a best-of-breed print conversion suite of programs, capable of transforming any PDL into any other. During this process, alterations can be made to the print stream with document sorting and consolidation, data extraction and logging, electronic stationery application and virtual insertions. All of this happens “on-the-fly”, as jobs are sent to printers, running at rated speed.

Document control is accomplished by job Profiles, which contain a list of commands to be applied as transformations take place. Document modification is achieved by program scripts which allow virtually unlimited customisation. Most jobs and scripts are triggered by jobs arriving to nominated folders.

Accordingly, there isn’t much of a requirement to place a user in front of an Output Manager screen to run and monitor jobs, as this happens pretty much automatically. However, eventually something happens which causes a job to fail; maybe the customer supplied a bad file or there’s a missing companion file for the job etc.

What we really want to happen is to have the job flagged and put to one side so processing can continue with other work. Output Manager has a solution to this and it’s called Unattended Mode. When Unattended Mode is active, jobs are processed as usual, but if any error occurs the job is put on HOLD and processing moves to the next job.

Unattended Mode is especially useful where processing occurs overnight with a skeleton staff. Job errors are logged and various mechanisms activated to send email alerts and/or post errors to a centrally monitored point.

When staff respond or arrive in the morning, they can address the failure at that stage. Meanwhile, the rest of the overnight processing has run through without an issue, keeping the wheels of production turning.

In order for this to occur, Output Manager must be setup as a Service, which starts when the PC starts (not when/if a user logs in). The OM Service can execute jobs based on print files arriving from multiple sources and requires no user intervention. Unattended Mode just needs to be turned on initially and will run until stopped manually.

Unattended Mode can even survive power outages, resuming in-process jobs once power returns and processing checkpoints are validated. It’s true industrial-strength, non-stop software.

Contact Atac to discuss how Output Manager can achieve a reliable “lights-out” environment for your business.

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Output Manager Indexing

Output Manager's scripting language, Output Enhancement or OE, includes the ability to index pages and/or documents based on "keys" generated by the script or extracted from the data itself. Indexing of entire documents (mailpieces) in conjunction with a Boundary Object is the most common use. So, how does this work in practice?

A technique called "Multi-Pass" processing is used, where the first pass delineates the documents and creates and writes the index value(s) which are to apply to each document. The second pass reads the input file using the Index created, which results in documents being processed in the sorted order, as defined by the index.

The OE script's PARENT statement looks like this:
[PARENT_Index] PARENT [OBJECT_Pass1] AND VDEOPTIONS INDEX "POSTCODE" [OBJECT_Pass2];

[OBJECT_Pass1] contains a Boundary Object which determines each document's start and end pages, builds the index and applies it to the document, like this:

```
[OBJECT_Pass1] OBJECT BOUNDARY SCAN0
        BEGINWINDOWX 10000 BEGINWINDOWY 2000
        ENDWINDOWX 20000 ENDWINDOWY 30000
        TEST
            [TEST_PageStart]
        ACTION
            [OBJECT_Extract_Postcode] AND //extract postcode from doc
            [INDEX_POSTCODE];
```

[TEST_Pagestart] TEST TEXT CONTAINS "Dear Sir";
[INDEX_POSTCODE] INDEX "POSTCODE" [OBJECT_Pass1] FROM [VARIABLE_Postcode] ASCENDING;

In this example, [OBJECT_Pass1] reads each side looking in the defined area for the text "Dear Sir". When found, this determines the start of the ***next*** document; [OBJECT_Pass1] then goes back to the start of the current document, extracts the Postcode, then indexes the entire document on the Postcode.

[OBJECT_Pass2] then executes, supplying the documents in Postcode sorted order. This allows your script to output print in Postcode sequence, perhaps inserting a coloured sheet when each Postcode changes, as well as accruing mailpiece/page totals for each Postcode.

It's important to note:

- The Boundary Object [OBJECT_Pass1] starts looking for the document start trigger on side TWO of the input file; it is assumed that side one is the start of the first document.
- The index transparently appends the document's starting side number, so docs (with the same Postcode) appear in the order initially encountered.
- If certain pages, like banners and trailers, are NOT indexed in Pass1, then they do not appear in Pass2 at all. This is a good technique to "drop" banners and trailers, which you do not want included in mailpieces i.e. mailed out to users.
- The code above is incomplete, as a simplified example only.

Whether documents have one, two or many pages makes no difference; a single Index is created which refers to all pages within the document.

Atac conducts OM & OE training, with hands-on experience for all attendees over three to five days, in your environment. Contact Atac to discuss your training needs, any time.

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Q & A

Q. Can you advise what this lcds data error means please? “DCO Code2codepageDCO reported this error while converting data – An error occurred while performing a character set conversion.”

A. This is an error from Barr Systems’ BHCS which indicates that a Code Page file is missing, when it tries to convert from one character set to another. Placement of a Code Page 3001 file fixed the issue.

Q. Is it possible for a customer to purchase 3 year or 5 year maintenance upfront?

A. Yes, a three year maintenance prepayment guarantees today’s rate and gets a 10% discount as well. A five year prepayment at today’s rate gets a 20% discount.

Q. Our Output Manager processing drops some QR codes. Why?

A. It turns out the two QR codes are being added as Overlays and the script’s “centring” routine only expects one Overlay per page. Once adjusted to handle multiple Overlays, the job runs through OK, with the missing QR codes re-appearing.

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