



Print Solutions from Atac

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Barr Host Communications Suite – Job Attributes Part 1 - Assignment

Barr's Host Communications Suite (BHCS) receives and transmits print jobs based on Attributes stored against each job. How are those Attributes set and can we automate/control assignment of same? First, we need to understand how Attributes are assigned and where we can affect them.

1. As jobs arrive from multiple sources, the sending machine provides a set of Attribute values which come "down the line" with each job. These may include the mainframe dataset name, the LPD queue used, the print data type, Class etc. and are dependent on the source and what it provides.
2. When we setup a receiving definition for jobs, we can define static values to be assigned to all jobs received from that source, i.e.
 - RJE print jobs can all be assigned a CLASS of "M" (over-riding any CLASS from the HOST).
 - Jobs polled in from disk can all be assigned to a particular Destination printer.
 - LPD jobs can all be assigned a high Priority, etc.
3. Next, jobs are processed through a set of Rules defined in an Override Table (O/T). Rule Actions are applied based on Conditions, which are tested and found true/false, i.e.
 - Unconditionally, set ALL jobs to HOLD.
 - If the FORM is STD, then set the Destination printer to XEROX and make the job Ready.
 - If the Document Name matches "JobSep*", then set the job to Delete after printing.
 - If a job's Size is LESS than 1000 characters, send it to a local printer.

Any job Attribute can be part of an Override Table Condition. Almost any job Attribute can be the target of an O/T Action. Multiple O/T Rules can be defined; a job may be affected by more than one Rule in the sequence defined. So, a job may be put on Hold initially, then another Rule may set the job to Ready if it came in via the LPD Queue "URGENT", for example.

So, jobs arrive with some values pre-set by the sending HOST. We can apply static values to all jobs arriving from a particular source. Finally, jobs are processed through the O/T, where some Conditional Logic can apply certain Attributes, if Conditions we define are met.

All of this happens BEFORE the job arrives into Spool. There is NO Override Table processing of jobs after arrival into Spool, i.e. no Rules are applied when jobs are Printed, Retained, Restored or Re-Printed.

Once jobs are present in Spool or Retain, we can manually alter on-screen Attributes to affect sequencing and where jobs are sent. Obviously, it's better if jobs can arrive into Spool with Attributes already set to send them where they need to go.

Understanding how and where we can apply job Attributes automatically can greatly ease the task of managing and processing Spool jobs.

More information at...

<https://www.atac.com.au>

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Barr Host Communications Suite – Job Attributes

Part 2 - Usage

Barr's Host Communications Suite (BHCS) provides several job Attributes on the Spool window for each job. These include FORM, CLASS and PRIORITY as well as Document Name, Date/Time, Size and State. White columns are used for Routing; when populated white columns next to a print device match a job's columns beneath (and printer & job are both Ready), jobs are sent to that print device.

Right-click any job and choose Properties to expose the full range of job Attributes, grouped into "Data Set Header", "Job Header" and "Job Trailer" sections. Some of these are populated by the sending machine; typically, "Data Set Header General" values are from a mainframe, "Data Set Header User Custom Section/LPD" values come from a Unix source and "Data Set Header Internal Custom" values define the job's data type, code page and other job handling options.

Attribute names are preceded by a four-character identifier for the Section from which they come, i.e. NDHG for "Data Set Header General", NDHD for "Data Set Header User Custom Section/LPD" etc. Any of these job Attributes can be shown on the Spool window and used for Grouping and Routing to printers.

First, examine the job's properties and determine which values are useful. Next, add / remove / sequence them via View | Format columns. Locate the relevant Section and highlight the Attribute on the left-hand side, then click ">" to move it to the right-hand side. Remove items with no benefit by highlighting them in the rhs and clicking "<".

Move items up and down on the rhs, rename them if you want, until you're happy with the content, then click OK. The Spool window will immediately change to display the rhs Attribute columns in the order chosen.

Once a job Attribute is on-screen, you can click it to change the value. Highlight multiple jobs, then click an Attribute to change it for ALL the selected jobs. In this fashion, you can mark and alter many jobs at once, Readying, Holding etc. en masse.

Attribute column headers can be clicked to Sort the job display into ascending or descending sequence. Click several headers to perform multi-level sorting, i.e. CLASS within FORM. More complex, multi-level sorting can be achieved via a View | Sort Order Wizard.

The job list can be Filtered, to only show jobs with a particular Attribute, i.e. right-click a CLASS and choose "Filter on Value" to collapse the job list down to only jobs with a matching CLASS. Use "Custom Filter" to build more complex filters which can be saved via View | Save Settings. Invoke them via View | Filter #, to quickly filter a large job list down to a more manageable size.

Use View | Clear Settings to remove all Sort and Filter criteria and display the full job list again. The "Clear Custom View" button on the button bar removes a Custom View and resets the screen content to defaults. Use this if you can't see all the jobs. If the "Clear Custom View" button is enabled (lit up) you're looking at a filtered list, so it's an immediate indicator that you're not seeing everything in Spool.

Filtering and Sorting can also be applied to the Retain window (where jobs are moved to after successful printing). This is very useful to locate jobs for restoring and reprinting.

By placing only useful job Attributes on-screen, then Sorting and Filtering to group "like" job types, the task of managing a job list is considerably simplified.

More information at...

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Output Manager – Automating Input Processing

Output Manager contains several mechanisms for receiving and processing jobs automatically. These include LPD, Hot-folders and Download links from a mainframe running MVS or VSE. The Connect tools in System Utilities allow us to define each of these with a variety of handling options available.

Connect-LPD allows us to setup multiple LPD input queues to handle data sent via LPR from TCP/IP HOSTS. This allows you to receive different file types from one or more HOSTS. Output options can be extracted from the LPD Header and used to direct submission to the appropriate Input Client and/or Job Profile. Advanced processing allows LPD commands to be used in conjunction with Lookup Tables to apply job options at a further level of granularity.

Connect-DLD provides the ability to interface with the mainframe host programs, MVS Download and Columbus Z, via TCP/IP, Channel or SNA links. Jobs appear in the “In Progress” job queue in an ACTIVE or HELD state. Multiple copies specified in the MVS download header are honoured and multiple datasets within one job can be Joined, Separated or shown as a Parent job with multiple children, just as they appear in the mainframe Job Queue.

Connect-SPL can poll local or LAN-attached folders for data files, then submit them to OM Input Clients via relevant Job Profiles. Connect-SPL watches for specific filenames or extensions, submitting each via a unique profile.

A command can be executed when a specific file appears in the nominated folder, such as invoking zip to unbundle files from a zip. Connect-SPL can also watch for Profiles with Specific names or extensions and submit those.

Connect-SPL supports file bundling to combine smaller jobs into large print jobs which can then benefit from mail sorting and printing on high-speed printers. Polling times, thresholds and sort criteria can be defined per entry.

Connect-SPL can watch for MRDF and/or KEY files to produce automated re-prints for spoils, providing Automated Document Factory (ADF) functionality with guaranteed “envelope insertion” auditability.

As files are submitted via any of the Connect Clients, they may optionally be moved to a Backup location so if the submission fails, the job is re-submitted. Pre- and post-Job commands may be specified to setup the processing environment and reset it afterwards.

Many Connect options allow construction of uniquely named files with complex substitution features available via lookup files. Wildcards (* & ?) are allowed for both data-name and profile-name fields.

Specific MERGE commands allow the processing of data files, possibly from different PDLs, through input as separate jobs which are then combined into a single job for output processing. For example, a DJDE Xerox job and a Postscript job can be processed by XRX-IN and PS-IN clients respectively, then output as though from a single job, through a PDF output client.

OM functionality can be controlled by a Service which starts when the machine is powered on. Input Clients (including Connect) can be auto-started by the Service at power-on. Faulty jobs can be aborted, allowing other jobs to continue, via the UNATTENDED operation switch. Alerts can be generated for aborted jobs, allowing subsequent follow-up.

The above functionality can be combined to produce job processing automation, with full Backup and Recovery abilities, of the highest level.

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Q & A

Q. Does Output Manager use .NET? If not, we'd like to remove it from the OM server.

A. After checking with Engineering, we have been told that LDAP Authentication and VDE Barcode recognition both use .NET functionality.

Q. Our organisation has several IPDS Converter systems from Barr Systems. We'd like to consolidate the maintenance for them all to an expiry date of 30jun2029. What benefits do we gain by doing this?

A. First, all renewals are calculated at today's price, locked in until 30jun2029. Secondly, prepayments of three years or more achieve a 10% discount. Thirdly, there's no more paperwork to do until 2029!

Q. We've received a PDF file from our customer; when we process it through Output Manager, parts are missing and we see messages about TRANSPARENCIES being ignored, when they are present.

A. Your profile probably has PDFIN_IGNORE_TRANSPARENCY=YES, which does not process transparencies correctly. Try PDFIN_IGNORE_TRANSPARENCY=NO in the profile and the missing parts should re-appear. Alternatively, ask your customer to provide PDF 1.3 format files, which do not contain transparencies. You can also pre-process the job through Acrobat Pro, saving it in "Optimised" (1.3) format, which "flattens" the file and removes transparencies.

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