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THE SOURCE

A newsletter about PRC® Software Configuration Management tool... for PRC users and friends

- [Greetings & News](#)
- [PRC Technical Tip: File pointers](#)
- [Support News](#)
- [Manuals & Tip Sheets](#)
- [Release Information](#)
- [Show Schedule](#)

**** Greetings****

It's been that summer-slowdown time for most of us. Here's wishing everyone a fantastic vacation and restful summer. Today's technical tip is about file pointers – both outlining some changes we've made to the way PRC handles file names and some information and recommendations that we discovered along the way.

**** PRC Technical Tip ** *File Pointers***

One of the biggest changes to PRC in the major overhaul to release 6 was in how it handles file pointers. A file pointer is the entry in the master dictionary / VOC file that tells the database server environment about the underlying file. On most platforms these are always F-pointers, DIR pointers or Q-pointers and on Raining Data environments these can be D-pointers.

In previous releases of PRC you could sort of work-around the rules by creating a synonym pointer to an existing file. So if you had a file called APPLE that was restricted, you could create a pointer called ORANGE that pointed to apple, then use ED ORANGE TEST.ITEM and bypass the security placed on APPLE. And if you thought this was a great *feature*, you can still have it. But for most of us it was a *loophole*. There is a new question on the PREFERENCES screen that lets you decide whether to "Track Real File?" And for those of you on the fence about it you can set the next prompt on that screen "Ask?" to "Yes".

If you do decide – and we recommend that you do – to track REAL file names, PRC will resolve the filename that you enter until it gets down to what it believes is the real file name. This is different on different platforms, and then it can be different according to how your company uses file pointers. In environments where the same file name might exist in more than one account, PRC can keep track of it with the account name appended, as ACCOUNT_FILE. And we are working our way to a version that will track the whole file path as that may be necessary in some cases.

But while we've been dueling with file names, a few ideas have presented themselves that can help tidy up your file structure and find "situations" that are waiting like time bombs to go off in your database:

- I. "Short" filenames – do you still have file names in your system that are shortened to 8 characters due to ancient restrictions? These file names end in 001, 002, etc. It may be a bit of a hassle to change those at the operating system level (Unix or Windows) and change all of the pointers accordingly – but those types of filenames don't serve any purpose (anymore) except to confuse the issue! Better to have the VOC version of the filename exactly match the underlying OS version of the file name.

- II. The same filename used in multiple accounts
 - a. For a reason – maybe you have a separate account for each company that your conglomerate/holding company or service providing company manages from a database perspective. In this case perhaps you have a file called CUST in each of many different accounts that share software. PRC will keep track of these with the account name as a prefix if you nominate the file as a “work file” – and you can indicate that ALL dictionary sections should be treated this way. On the other hand, if you are meaning to share the software and only need the data separate, would it be worth the effort to consolidate the dict sections of these files into one directory?
 - b. For no reason – some companies just have accidentally re-used filenames. Or situation where company mergers or multiple software acquisitions have resulted in the same file name being use for different purposes in different accounts. Remember, if the underlying software being managed by PRC is quit different, a separate suite of Realms (DEV, TEST, LIVE, whatever) for each application is probably justified. If this is not the case – or if that would be a major overkill, a better solution is to bite the bullet and resolve the situation by renaming some files (and, yes, finding all the programs that open them).
- III. Qpointers are supported on Pick and Universe, but not on Unidata. While they can be used in any way for any reason to point to a file, we’ve come up through trial and error with the general belief that Qpointers should be used for synonym file names or to point to files in other accounts. Any “real” file pointer should have an F (or a D) pointer in its home directory. If you can take a look at your VOC/MD directory with that in mind, it does make things easier going forward.

**** SUPPORT ****

The new support system has been in place for a few months now. We seem to run into one bump after another, but we are still convinced that it is our best solution.

Read on especially if you are not entirely pleased with the support system.

When you send your support emails to support@sjplus.com two important things happen – First, the email is forwarded at the ISP level to more than one recipient. This means you will get a response even if I am personally not available. It also means that your question or issue is logged into our new support database – that gives us a case number to refer to, and a history to review over time.

Many of you I think still email me out of habit – I understand. But maybe take a minute and change the address that you have for me. I’ll always get the support@sjplus.com e-mails too – but I won’t be the only one!

If anybody is unhappy with how its working please don’t hesitate to let us know. Know that we’ve considered other options – and we want to hear from you on it if you have thoughts, ideas, complaints, frustrations. Our goal is to give you better, faster support.

Reminders about using SJ+ Support:

1. Always begin a support case via e.mail to support@sjplus.com (or use the form at http://sjplus.com/support_inquiry.cfm)
2. Please include:

- a. Is this a **bug/problem**, an **enhancement idea** or a “**remind me how to**” case.
(If you need a reminder, be sure to check the Tip Sheets!)
- b. If you are reporting a **bug or problem** please indicate:
 1. Your urgency
 2. The user ID
 3. The account and machine
 4. The project number
 5. The error message

Please note that if you usually get your ‘first line’ of support from your vendor, this is still the best practice for you!

**** Manuals & Tip Sheets ****

Our focus with Rockfish Writing lately has been the **Tip Sheets**. John Catlin has created a beautiful (and readable!) new format for these and has cleaned up my writing on a number of them. We are loading them to the website in adobe acrobat (.pdf) format. The old and the new tip-sheets are still available in Word format on the web-site, also.

We are also hard at work on an overall **Administrator’s Guide** to go with our beautiful new programmer’s guide. Anyone been using the new programmer’s guide and have feedback for us? We’d love to hear it – good or bad. The Administrator’s Guide, shortly followed by the Installation Guide, will be online very soon.

**** RELEASE INFORMATION ****

The current field release is **PRC 6.5.i**. There is very little need to upgrade patch releases if you are on 6.5, but we can do so in specific cases. The things that have changed in the recent patches have a lot to do with SB+ GUI, Prime Information flavor functionality, support for specific vendor software – FW Davison’s HRP software and Datatel’s Colleague software. And – as this issue’s tech tip outlines – we’ve made changes to support various file pointers.

Release 6 will go static in the next few weeks and work will begin on Release 7 for 2007. If you have an idea that you’d like to see realized in Release 7, please let us know.

**** Shows ** (or Where in the World is Susan?)**

ISACA Sox Symposium, Chicago, Aug 17,18

IBM Information On Demand in Anaheim, Oct 15 -20

International Spectrum, Sydney,Australia, Nov 1,2

International Spectrum, NJ, USA, Nov 14, 15

<http://sjplus.com>

PRC® Complete software configuration management for Multivalue development.

[HOW DID I GET ON THIS LIST? We’ve corresponded in the past or you are the company liaison for PRC support.]

[HOW DO I GET OFF THIS LIST? Just tell me, via reply.]

[HOW DO I ADD OTHERS TO THIS LIST? Just tell me, via reply.]