

RoboHelp® Tips & Tricks

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group

*Creating user-centered
documentation & training*

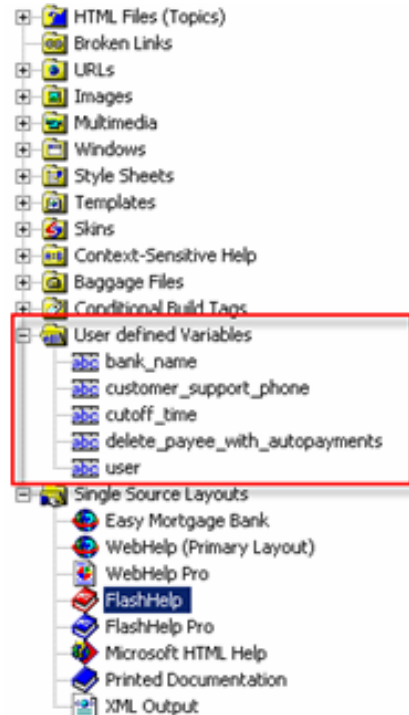


Focus of this Session

- I am not going to cover Javascripting and hacking into RoboHelp projects
- Instead, I am going to share ways to use RoboHelp more effectively using the features that are built in to the product



Variables As Snippets



- Create a variable up to 255 characters
- Insert the variable anywhere you need to use that text
- Variables inherit the formatting where they are inserted
- Variables can be copied to other projects (but they can't be centrally stored)

The Project Manager displays and organizes topics and other project items into folders. Click the plus sign next to each folder to open it. You can right-click folders and the items inside folders to select options. You can double-click items to open or edit them. You can also drag and drop topics, images, and other items into the WYSIWYG Editor.



Variables As Snippets

Deleting Online Bills

When you delete a payee, any scheduled automatic payments will be deleted. This one is *expanding text* *When you delete a payee, any scheduled automatic payments will be deleted.* in a sentence.

- Bullet 1
- *When you delete a payee, any scheduled automatic payments will be deleted.*
- Bullet 3

Variable Text
When you delete a payee, any scheduled automatic payments will be deleted.

When you delete a payee, any scheduled automatic payments will be deleted.

1. When you delete a payee, any scheduled automatic payments will be deleted.
2. Two
When you delete a payee, any scheduled automatic payments will be deleted.
3. Three

Note: When you delete a payee, any scheduled automatic payments will be deleted.

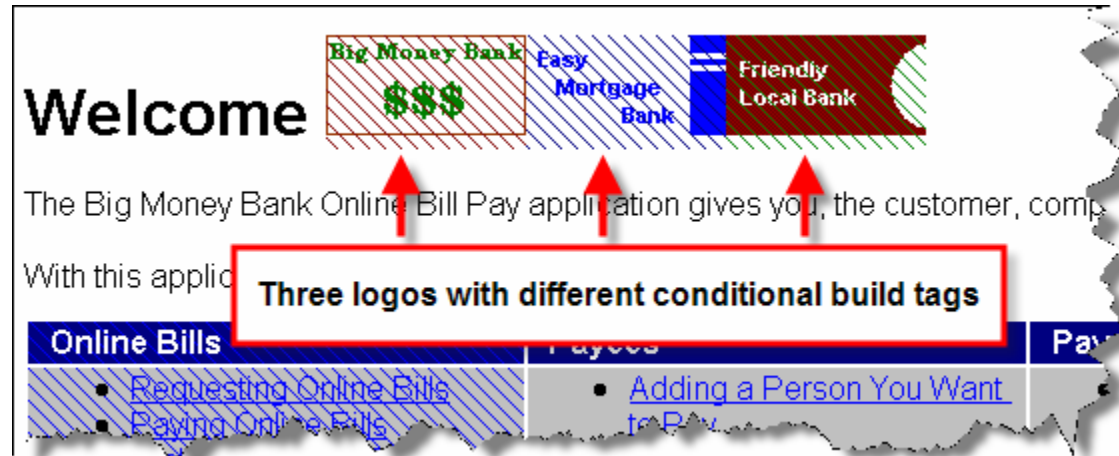
And this one is between two sentences. *When you delete a payee, any scheduled automatic payments will be deleted.* This is the third sentence.

Drop-down link
When you delete a payee, any scheduled automatic payments will be deleted.

Variable as link: [When you delete a payee, any scheduled automatic payments will be deleted.](#)



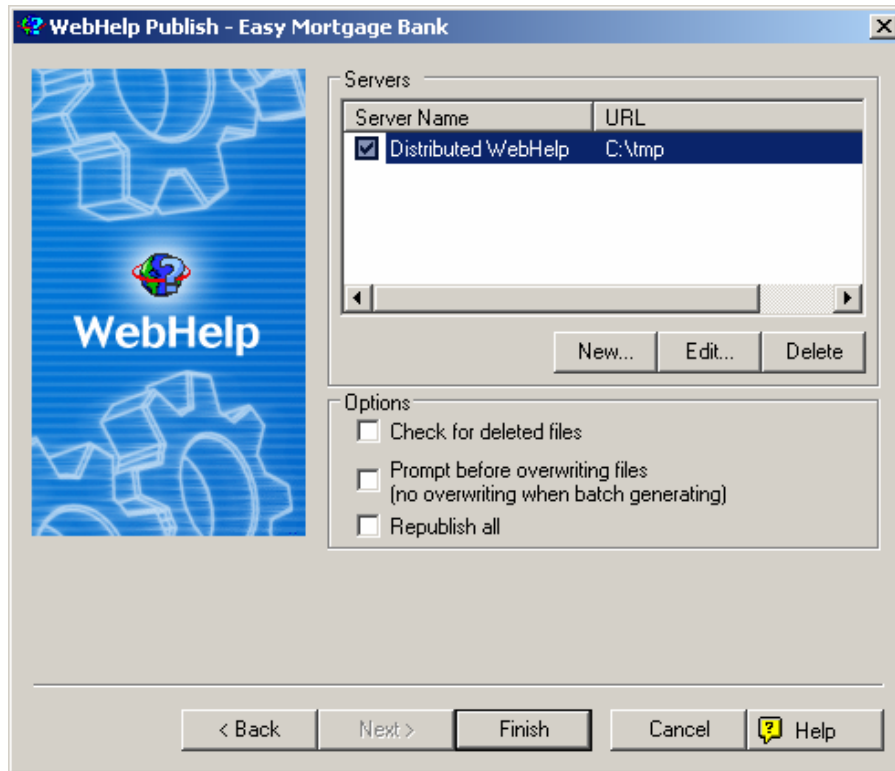
What if you need graphics as variables?



- Insert multiple graphics in the same location and use conditional tags to hide the ones you don't need
- Alternative: Use the same image name and the same size and swap the images folder before creating a build.



Pushing Help Files to a Local Desktop



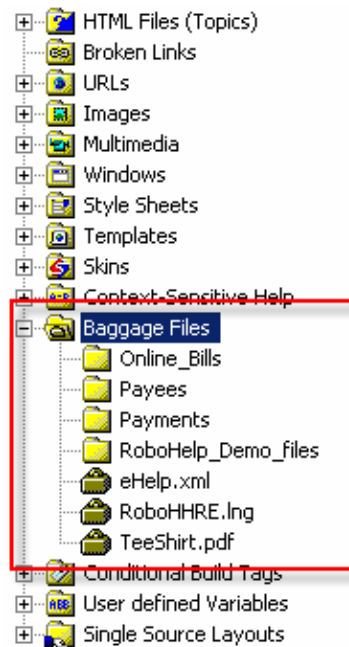
- Many IT departments use push technology to update users' desktops at night
- If you are delivering desktop-based help, use WebHelp (with Mark of the Web enabled) so you can push only those files that have changed
- Use the Publishing wizard to ensure that you send all of the files that changed
- The Publishing wizard is the best way to update your WebHelp systems wherever they exist, even if you are sending the files to the web administrator to post for you

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Linking to External Files



- If you need to link to external files, you can put them on the web and link to the URL
- OR, you can include them in your current project as baggage files to ensure that they are published with your help (just linking to external files does not include them with the project)
- You can drag files from the baggage folder into topics to create a link

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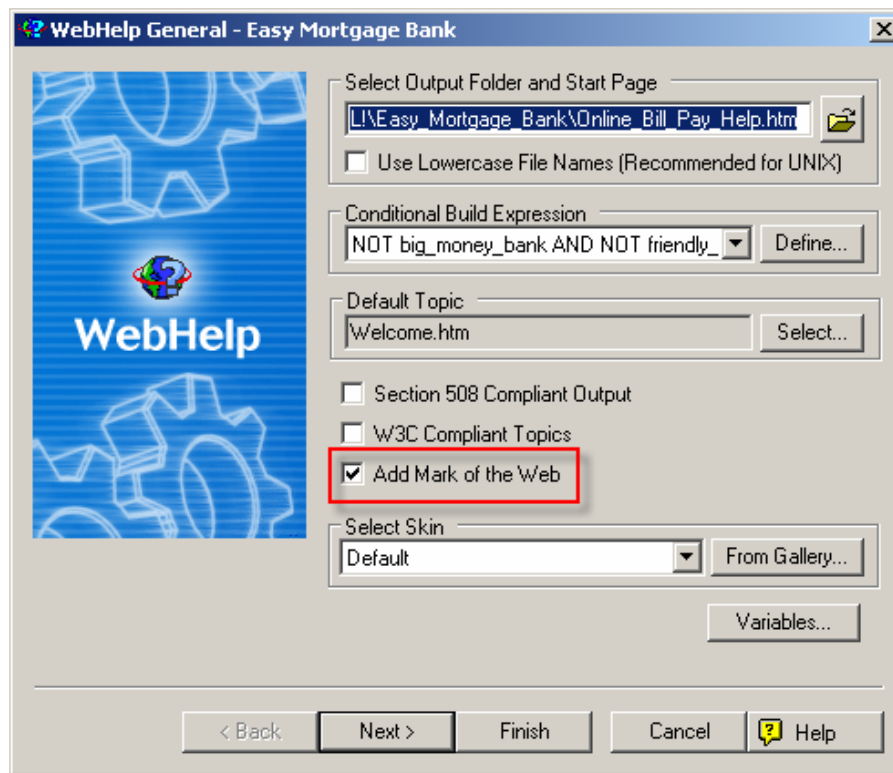


Hiding Context-sensitive and Popup Topics

- RH doesn't allow you to hide topics from the full-text search
- Create two projects and place all of your context-sensitive and popup topics in a second project
- Also allows you to share popups across projects
- Don't rename any of the "hidden" topics because the links aren't updated across projects



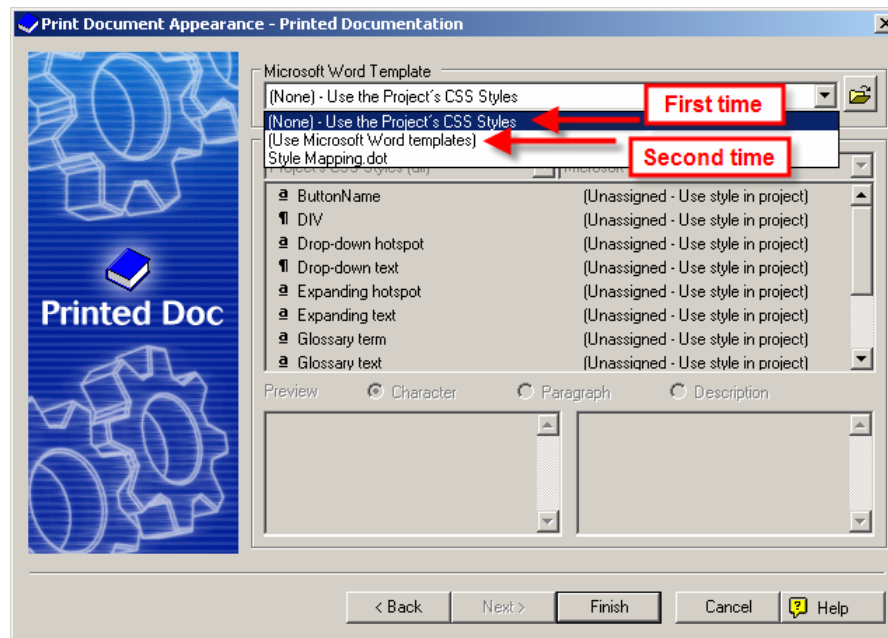
Time-saving Techniques



- Check Mark of the Web (in the single-source layout) to get rid of the active content warning when viewing WebHelp or FlashHelp locally



Time-saving Techniques



- Generate the initial stylesheet for a printed document from the CSS file
- Then, edit the DOT file to make it look right for print
- In subsequent printed outputs, specify the modified DOT file
- Do not create new styles in the DOT file unless they correspond to new CSS styles

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Underused Features in RoboHelp

- RoboHelp Server can search external documents (PDF, DOC, PPT, XLS)
- Works great for policies and procedures
- Consideration: You have to have one license of the server software for each major help project (group of searchable documents)



Underused Features in RoboHelp

- Even individual users should be using source control integration
- Benefits: Versions and rollback; change tracking (diffs and accountability); multiple authors
- In RoboHelp 6, RoboSource Control 3 received installation and performance improvements
- Or, you can use Visual SourceSafe or other programs that support the Microsoft SCC API



Underused Features in RoboHelp

```
C:\WINDOWS\system32\cmd.exe
C:\Program Files\Adobe\RoboHelp 6.0\RoboHTML>rhcl -?
Adobe (R) RoboHelp Project Command Line Compiler version 6.00.099
Copyright (C) 2006 Adobe Macromedia Software LLC. All rights reserved.

Usage: RHCL [-r project] [-l layout_name] [-p [server_name[:user_name:password]]]
           [-o output_folder_name] [-d]

Option Description:
project Specifies a RoboHelp project file .xpj.
-l Specifies a layout name.
  Primary layout is used by default.
-p Specifies publishing server with optional username and password.
  If no server name is specified after -p, RHCL will publish the result
  to all servers that are available to the layout.
-o Specifies output folder name.
  The layout's default output folder is used by default.
-d Displays all layout name(s) and publishing server name(s).
-h Generates all layouts set for batch generation in the project.
-?, -h Requests online help.

Examples:
RHCL c:\project\myhelp.xpj
RHCL "c:\my_project\myhelp.xpj"
RHCL c:\MY_DOC\1\MY_PROJ\1.XPJ
RHCL c:\project\myproject.xpj -d
RHCL c:\project\myhelp.xpj -l "Microsoft HTML Help"
RHCL c:\project\myhelp.xpj -l WebHelp -p
RHCL c:\project\myhelp.xpj -l FlashHelp -p server1:user1:password1 -p server2
RHCL c:\project\myhelp.xpj -l "My Layout" -o "c:\Output\My Layout Output"

C:\Program Files\Adobe\RoboHelp 6.0\RoboHTML>
```

- Use the command line compile feature to generate all of your projects overnight
- You can specify existing layouts and destinations
- You can install RoboHelp on a second machine such as a server where you can run the command line compile (you just can't be using both versions at the same time)
- Development can use the command line compile when they do their program builds



Common Mistakes

- Creating too many projects
- If you have shared content across multiple projects, put them in the same project and generate multiple layouts using conditional build tags
- Example: System administrator's help can be generated from the regular user help



Common Mistakes

- Spending too much time customizing RoboHelp to do things that it wasn't designed to do
 - Creates additional work while authoring
 - Requires maintenance and testing when upgrading versions or migrating data
 - Good help is about good content, not custom interface controls



Common Mistakes

- Making formatting changes to imported Word documents
- If you import a document and it requires extensive formatting changes, make the changes in Word using Search and Replace and Word macros, then re-import the document



Include Better Content

- The best way to improve your help is to write better content—content that helps users make decisions
 - Best practices
 - Time-saving tips and tricks
 - Conceptual information
 - Troubleshooting support
- This information is often not available until the second release, so make time to go back and add it



Thank You!

- Here are some sites to explore if you feel compelled to add scripts to your RoboHelp
 - www.grainge.org
 - www.robowizard.com
- Check out my site for monthly RoboHelp and Captivate tips and tricks
 - www.userassistance.com
- Keep in touch:

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