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A Shot of Red i

Issue Nineteen - August 2003

Welcome to the August 2003 edition of A Shot of Red *i*. We were thinking of renaming this months issue A Shot of Black *i*, in recognition of the All Black's recent efforts. Let's hope they keep up the good form and get their hands on that missing piece of Silverware.

In this month's edition, we cover:

- [New Release – iFIX v3.5](#)
- [New Release – iHistorian v2.0](#)
- [New I/O Driver – SI5 for Siemens S5 PLC's](#)
- [Enhanced I/O Driver – IGS for Allen Bradley PLC's](#)

As always, if there is anything that you would like covered in a future issue of A Shot of Red *i*, please let us know as we are always open to suggestions (redi@iic.co.nz).

New Release - iFIX v3.5

The latest release of *iFIX*, v3.5 is just around the corner. The new and improved features of *iFIX* v3.5, can be broken down in to three categories:

- [New - Application Project Management Tools](#)
- [Enhancements for Terminal Server Applications](#)
- [Enhanced OPC & VBA support](#)

Application Project Management Tools

iFIX v3.5 provides improved management of application files, such as pictures, databases, and tag groups, by allowing you to associate these files with specific paths, defined on a per project basis.

You can create user profiles that identify specific *i*FIX project configurations that you want to load when a user attempts to start *i*FIX. The project configurations associate a Windows user with a specific SCU and node name.

Once you set up your project paths, user profiles, and other configuration tasks, you can monitor changes to these files. The enhanced Backup & Restore Wizard also makes application maintenance and distribution easier to accomplish.

The *i*FIX project management improvements include:

SCU Modifications

The SCU (System Configuration Utility) includes the ability to set a project path and browse for files within the Path Configuration dialog box. By making the paths configurable, you can rapidly switch between other projects on the same computer.

New Start up Profile Manager Application

With the Start up Profile Manager you create *i*FIX user profiles. Each profile associates a Windows user name with a specific *i*FIX Project Configuration. The *i*FIX Project Configuration includes:

- SCU path and file name that you want the specified Windows user to use when starting *i*FIX.
- Node name that you want the specified Windows user to use when starting *i*FIX.
- Restrictions on whether the user can modify the Nodename or SCU fields in the *i*FIX Start up dialog box (Launch.exe), or use the *i*FIX Sample System.

The Start up Profile Manager is especially valuable when you are managing many users, such as when you use Terminal Services. For instance, with the Start up Profile Manager, you can globally define a default profile for all Windows users without profiles, and then create specific profiles for specific Windows users. Management of many user profiles is easily performed at a global level and the individual user level.

New *i*FIX Start up Dialog Box

With the new *i*FIX Start up dialog box, also known as the Launch application, a user can now start *i*FIX with specific project configurations. These project configurations, which can be defined in the new Start up Profile Manager, include the node name and SCU file. These project configuration settings automatically populate the *i*FIX Start up dialog box when you open it.

Depending on how you defined your user profiles in the Start up Profile Manager, you can restrict the ability to edit the SCU and Nodename fields from this dialog box. You can also disable access to the Sample System from this dialog box, or prevent this dialog box from displaying at all.

For instance, for *i*FIX application developers, you might want to enable full access to this dialog box. But for *i*FIX operators, perhaps you want to block use of the Sample System, or block any use of this dialog box and hide it from displaying to the user. From the *i*FIX Start up dialog box, there is an icon to start the SCU as well, and perhaps you don't want operators from accessing the SCU.

New Application Validator Utility

With the *i*FIX v3.5 Application Validator you can monitor and report on changes to the files that make up your *i*FIX application.

This utility is most helpful, for instance, when you finish configuring your *i*FIX system. You can create a baseline of the *i*FIX files and folders and other files and folders associated with your process in the Application Validator and then you can monitor which files and folders changed since you created the baseline.

For instance, if you ever run into problems with your *i*FIX configuration and want to go back to an original configuration, you can use the Application Validator to determine which files were changed or added, and then you can rollback to that configuration. An outline of the features in the Application Validator includes:

Summary report of the changed folders, in online or printed format.

- Detailed report of the changed files in each folder, in online or printed format.
- Ability to save the detailed report to a .CSV or .TXT file.
- Ability to use the Application Validator with or without *i*FIX.
- Option to run the Application Validator from the *i*FIX WorkSpace or the command line.

You can also use the Application Validator to ensure that the files associated with other applications (eg. Operational Guidelines stored in Word) have not changed as well.

Enhancements to the Backup and Restore Wizard

To help you manage your *i*FIX application files, *i*FIX v3.5 includes a new and improved Backup and Restore wizard. With this wizard you can backup and restore application files across multiple *i*FIX projects using the Project Path concept, which is also new in *i*FIX v3.5.

New features for backup and restore that should assist you with application maintenance and distribution include:

- Ability to select a specified destination for the restored files, as well as the individual files you want to restore.
- Full backup ability that now includes all files, including .INI files.
- Ability to delete all existing files under a target project path before performing a restore. This action removes any existing application files in the destination paths, with the exception of the security files.
- Ability to restore the *i*FIX factory defaults of your original install before restoring the backed up files.
- For system integrators and advanced *i*FIX users, the ability to modify the factory defaults, so that you can restore your *i*FIX application based on your own factory default settings.
- Option to retain the current SCU security settings for the restore, replace the SCU settings with the ones in the archive, or create a new project requiring the input of a new project folder to complete the restore.
- Command line support. This is especially useful if you want to automate backup and restore operations through scripting or external programs.

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Enhancements for Terminal Server Applications

Enhancements for Terminal Server Applications

The Terminal Services enhancements included with *i*FIX v3.5 focus on ease of configuration, administration, and performance without compromising *i*FIX Security.

The enhancements for Terminal Server in *i*FIX v3.5 include:

- Easier set up and maintenance of Terminal Service users.
- Ability to host several applications or projects on a single computer, jumping back and forth between them during development and easily managing application files across projects.
- Configuration and management of *i*FIX SCU files for use with Terminal Services, which includes the ability to create a list of users and assign Terminal Services configurations to them based on roles.
- Removal of the IP dependency, enabling data access through automatically assigned or shared IPs. Since a hard assignment of an IP address is no longer required in *i*FIX v3.5, you are allowed firewall access and easier system administration.

- New *i*FIX Start up dialog box (Launch.exe) that allows you to select an *i*FIX SCU file at start up or predefine the SCU that launches for each Windows user.

Handheld Screen Size Support in the Create Picture Wizard

The *i*FIX v3.5 Create Picture Wizard includes new screen definitions for handheld Terminal Server capable devices. Standard screen sizes include 240x320 and 320x240, and you can also select your own custom resolutions.

Microsoft Windows Server 2003 Support

*i*FIX v3.5 product includes support for the Microsoft Windows Server 2003 operating system, in addition to the other supported Windows operating systems (Windows NT v4.0 - Workstation & Server, Windows 2000 - Professional & Server, Windows XP Professional). One of the most noted benefits of Microsoft Windows Server 2003, for the *i*FIX user, is support of the Microsoft .NET framework.

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Enhanced OPC & VBA Support

OPC Enhancements

*i*FIX v3.5 OPC (OLE for Process Control) enhancements include:

- OPC Client DCOM (Distributed Common Object Model) support from the *i*FIX WorkSpace.
- OPC Server DCOM support for the *i*FIX Process Database. This allows the use of DCOM for remote connectivity.
- *i*FIX supports an OPC Data Server (opc20ifix.exe), as well as OPCEDA. The opc20ifix.exe file, found in your DYNAMICS directory, supports out-of-process OPC Data Access 2.0 interfaces.

Microsoft VBA v6.3 Update

*i*FIX v3.5 includes v6.3 of Microsoft Visual Basic for Applications (VBA). This is an update to the VBA included with previous *i*FIX releases. VBA v6.3 installs directly from the *i*FIX v3.5 product CD. Microsoft already includes VBA v6.3 as part of Microsoft Office XP. You can use VBA to customize and extend the functionality of *i*FIX

Improved Format for the *i*FIX VBA Help System

*i*FIX v3.5 includes an updated Help display format for the *i*FIX Automation Reference (VBA) Help system. The *i*FIX VBA Help system now displays as

Microsoft HTML Help, which fixes broken links that previously occurred in earlier *i*FIX versions.

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New Release - *i*Historian v2.0

*i*Historian is a plant-wide data historian that collects, archives and distributes tremendous volumes of real-time, plant floor process information at extremely high speed. *i*Historian represents a leap in the performance, utility and affordability of plant-wide data historians. Scalable to 100,000 data points per server, *i*Historian delivers high-volume data collection and retrieval, without sacrificing speed or performance. Extensible and economical, *i*Historian gives you significantly greater visibility into your manufacturing operations so you can analyse and improve both your performance and your bottom line.

*i*Historian 2.0 delivers advanced data management functionality with the introduction of two new collectors: The Calculation Collector and the Server-to-Server Collector.

The Calculation Collector

The Calculation Collector is a superior calculation engine, enabling you to perform advanced calculations, metrics, key performance indicators (KPIs) and analysis on plant-wide data and store the results within *i*Historian.

The *i*Historian Calculation Collector allows you to quickly define your own calculations using the built-in Calculation Wizard. It also gives you the power to leverage any of the commonly used predefined calculations bundled with the application or even script your own customized calculations. These results are then immediately stored within the *i*Historian database, both simplifying and accelerating actions such as KPI reporting and efficiency analysis.

The Server-to-Server Collector

The Server-to-Server Collector is used to quickly and easily distribute data from one *i*Historian to another, enabling data distribution and "store and forward" data recovery. This is particularly useful when leveraging an infrastructure where multiple remote historians are collecting, aggregating and calculating data (such as *i*Historians at remote facilities) and reporting into a central historian (such as an *i*Historian at a corporate headquarters).

With the Server-to-Server collector, you can centralize administration of all remote tags and standardize on KPI metrics and reporting standards across multiple locations, thereby streamlining your processes and reducing variances.

In addition, the Server-to-Server Collector also allows you to capture full Audit Trail information - giving you a complete record of "who did what, where and when" within a process - and seamlessly share that data with the central historian. This is a particularly critical feature for businesses operating within the regulated industries, such as those under the guidance of the Food and Drug Administration.

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New I/O Driver - SI5 for Siemens S5 PLC's

The driver team announces the release of its latest offering for Siemens hardware, the Siemens S5 (SI5) driver. This OPC Data Access 2.0 certified driver, which is based upon the SL4 driver, offers Ethernet connectivity to Siemens S5 PLCs via a standard Ethernet card.

To learn more about this driver, please [click here](#).

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Enhanced I/O Driver - IGS for Allen Bradley PLC's

The IGS for Allen-Bradley driver has been redesigned to use a new methodology to obtain data directly from the Allen-Bradley ControlLogix processors. The result of this effort is a huge boost in driver performance. The redesign resulted in the ability to gather more data from the processors and reduce the load on the PLC.

A time saving configuration feature has also been added. This new version the IGS for Allen-Bradley will have the ability to directly import the tag database from the processor (without going through the .L5K file). In addition to providing easier configuration to the user, this feature results in optimization of data gathering from the PLC, translating into better overall driver performance.

Support for Rockwell Softlogix5800 has been added. This product uses the PC in place of a PLC for industrial control. SoftLogix5800 emulates a Controllogix PLC.

The updated driver with these new features is now released. To learn more about this driver, please [click here](#).

Re-Cap: The IGS Driver is stand-alone solution for communications to the AB range of PLC's, which does not require the use of RSLinx.

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