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Source Control in RoboHelp

By Willam van Weelden on 31st July 2017

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Source control is a mechanism where you store all RoboHelp project files in a central repository. Every author works with a local copy of the project connected to the central repository. Whenever an author wants to make a change, she checks out the document from the repository. This blocks other authors from making



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changes to the file until the author checks in her changes. Because the files are in a central repository, all changes an author makes are instantly available for all authors.

Source control is also a great disaster recovery option. Whenever a project is corrupted, the author can simply remove the local project and get the latest version of the project from the repository. And if the latest version in the repository is corrupted, it is very easy to rollback the repository to a previous version.

Source control is the only way to allow multiple authors to work on the same RoboHelp project at the same time.

What are My Options?

With source control, the easiest option is usually the best. Here are the three global options:

1. Use **SharePoint**: This is very easy to set up and if you are a SharePoint administrator you don't need any IT guys helping out. This is by far the simplest way to go.
 1. You will need SharePoint 2010 or 2013. SharePoint 365 doesn't work.
 2. If you have SharePoint there is no additional cost involved.
 3. Using SharePoint for version control is available from RoboHelp 10 and later.
2. Use **RoboSourceControl**: This is the source control system included in RoboHelp itself.
 1. It works rather well, but it is a pain to set up. You need a database (and a server to host that) and connect every team member to the

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- source control system.
2. You will require the support of an IT guy. I normally advise against this system because it is so problematic to set up.
 3. There is no additional cost for this option.
3. Use (the free) **Visual Studio Online**: This is a full blown source control system (Team Foundation Server in the cloud).
1. You get a lightweight TFS for free for up to 5 users. (Free editions, no limit for paid editions)
 2. You can use the free Team Explorer or a full Visual Studio edition.
 3. Backups handled by Microsoft. (Online only)
 4. Ideal to set up for small teams.
 5. Your data is stored off premise. This may be a deal breaker.
4. Use the source control system your developers use.
1. If your developers use a source control system that support the Microsoft SCC API, you can use that source control system. The advantage of these systems is that they are generally more robust than SharePoint, they are optimized for speed and they offer many advanced features that SharePoint lacks such as check in policies, integration with issue trackers, reports, etc.
 2. The knowledge of this system is already in house so no consulting will be required for this side.
 3. All your sources are stored in the same system as your application sources.
 4. You data can be kept on premise.
 5. You will need the support of the manager of the source control system and most likely

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- also the support of an IT guy.
6. You will be able to get a complete version of a project from a specific label/date/etc at once. With SharePoint you can only get older versions of individual files.
 7. Depending on your licensing structure, this option may require more additional licenses.

Source Control outside of RoboHelp

The above options all assume you will let RoboHelp handle source control. That is by far the easiest option as authors won't have to think about checking out. RoboHelp can take care of that. And RoboHelp will instruct authors to check in changes when they close the project.

You can also use source control outside RoboHelp. In that case, you manually check in and check out all the project files.

This way of working is an option if your source control system isn't compatible with RoboHelp (the Microsoft MSSCCI provider to be specific). If you choose this option, it is up to the authors to make sure all changes are checked in correctly.

An added complication of this method is that not all files in the project folder are to be included in source control. These files are:

- .PSS file
- .CPF file
- !SSL! directory

If you check in any of the above files, RoboHelp may behave in an unexpected manner.

Which System to Choose?

	RoboSource	SharePoint	Visual Studio Online	Other Source Control
We need it tomorrow	—	++	++	+
Free of charge	++	If you have SharePoint Paid after that.	Up to 5 people.	Depends on licensing.
No maintenance	—	-	++	-
Data on premise	++	++ (Only on-premises SharePoint is supported)	—	++
Powerful history controls	+/-	—	++	++

You can always later change the source control system you use. But you will lose all history when you do this.

Setting up Source Control

In this section you will find links and instructions for setting up source control using different source control systems.

Perforce

To integrate with Perforce, see the following article:

<http://www.adobe.com/devnet/robohelp/articles/perforce-integration.html>

RoboSourceControl 3.1

To integrate with RoboSourceControl 3.1, see the following article:

http://help.adobe.com/en_US/RoboSourceControl/7.0/RoboSource_Control_Help/getstrtd.

The instructions point to the help of RoboHelp 7. Setting up RoboSourceControl has not changed. The instructions provided are still accurate.

Note: The installation of RoboSourceControl is available only in the RoboHelp installation. If you are using the Technical Communication Suite, you have to download the RoboHelp installation for the RoboSourceControl application. You can get the RoboHelp installation here:

<https://www.adobe.com/products/robohelp/download-trial/try.html>

SharePoint

To integrate with SharePoint, see the following article:

<http://www.wvanweelden.eu/blog/2013/08/17/adobe->

robohelp-using-sharepoint-version-control

To be able to use SharePoint, you have to install the Microsoft SQL Server Compact 3.5 Service Pack 2. Without it, RoboHelp may crash when attempting to open projects under version control. You can get the free download from Microsoft:

<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/download/details.aspx?id=5783>

Note: Currently, only SharePoint on-premises is supported.

Subversion

To integrate with Subversion, see the following article:

http://www.adobe.com/devnet/robohelp/articles/robohelp_subversion.html

Team Foundation Server or Visual Studio Online

The difference between Team Foundation Server (TFS) and Visual Studio Online is that TFS is run and managed on premises. You need a server and database to run it. Visual Studio Online runs in the Microsoft Cloud. You only need to connect to it.

For Visual Studio Online

- To use Visual Studio Online, you have to create a free account.
- Once you created the account, add users so everyone has access.

For Team Foundation Server on

premise

You can get a free version of Team Foundation Server Express for small teams (up to 5 people) from Microsoft.

Setting up Version Control

Before you can use Team Foundation Server or Visual Studio Online in RoboHelp, you need to set up the server to be used by your team:

- Make sure that there is a project and that all authors are authorised to use that project. The project must be of the type 'TFS'. If you are asked to choose between 'GIT' and 'TFS', always choose 'TFS'.
- Create folders within the project to store the help.
- Make sure to disable the multiple check out option. Allowing multiple check out is not supported by RoboHelp and can lead to unexpected results. The steps to change this setting can be found here:
<https://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms242869.aspx>

To work with TFS, you need to install the following software on all clients that will run RoboHelp:

- Team Explorer 2013 (free client to connect to server)
- MSSCCI provider (32 bit) for TFS 2013 (free plugin to allow RoboHelp to connect to Team Explorer)

Once the system is set up, follow the instructions in the following article to add your projects to source control:

<http://www.adobe.com/devnet/robohelp/articles/robohelp-tfs-integration.html>

Other Useful Links

- Adding projects to source control (generic):
http://help.adobe.com/en_US/robohelp/robohtml/WS70335ED7-F7CE-42bd-8B06-15E4F57E4360.html

Questions?

Are you struggling to set up or use source control? Or do you need expert support to set up source control? Feel free to [contact us](#).

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