the professional labeling software

NiceLabel

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NiceLabel Version 5.2 Standard Series

Release Notes

Rev-0911

The software version that introduced a feature is specified in the topic name.
The features without any version in the topic name were introduced with 5.2.0.

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What is New in General

General New Enhancements

Unicode support in the Autorun Application

The Autorun startup application that is used for NiceLabel CD navigation now speaks Unicode. The Autorun application could already detect the system language set in the Windows regional settings, and displayed the menu in the corresponding language.

With the new version you can also see how the menus are displayed in other languages, even if you do not have your system regional settings defined for that language. For example, you can start the Autorun in Chinese or Thai language, while the regional settings are set to English. The application accepts three letter language abbreviations as the command-line parameter, like START.EXE GER (to start CD navigation in German language).

Native Support for MySQL Databases

Native support was added for MySQL databases. It provides faster access to MySQL and enhanced communication with MySQL Server. You do not have to work with the OLE DB drivers, but can connect direct to the MySQL server.

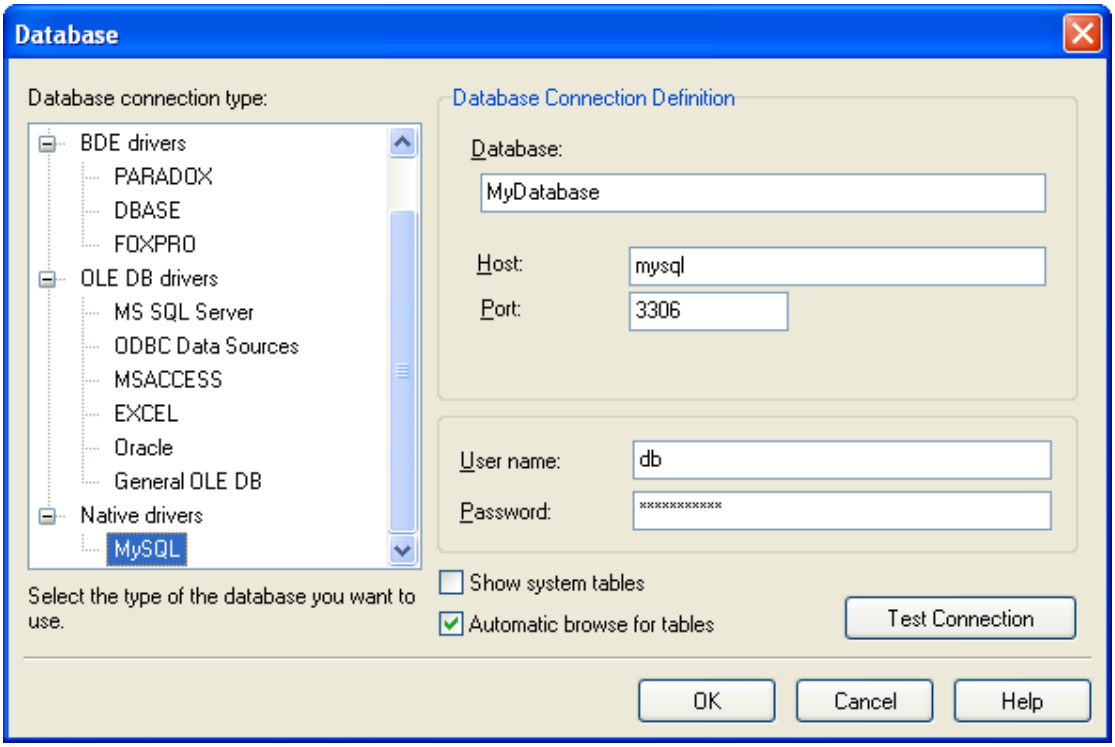

Figure 1: Native support for MySQL databases

Native MySQL access is present in all modules that can work with MySQL databases (NiceLabel, NiceData, NiceForm, and NiceWatch).

Reprint Improvements

The Reprint dialog box provides additional information, which is useful when you need to reprint the labels to some other printer, not the original printer that was used for the initial printout.

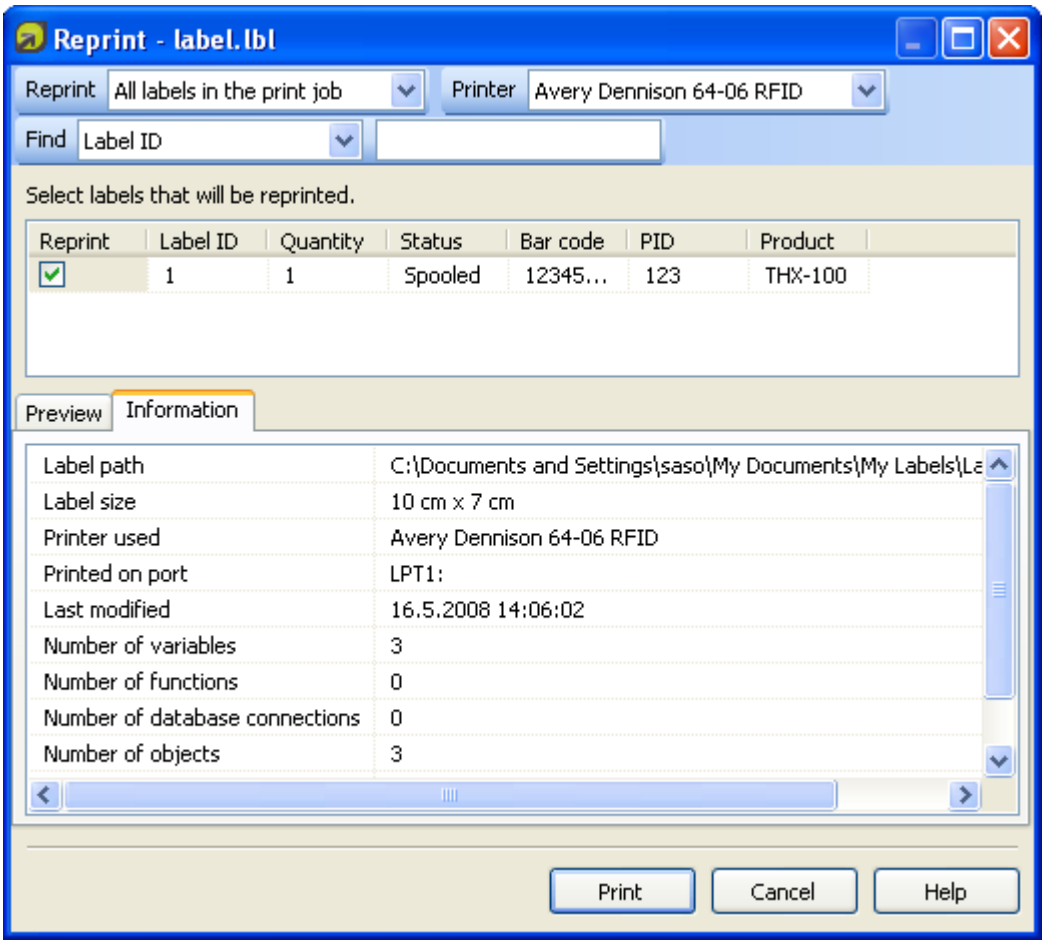

Figure 2: The reprint dialog box with more label-related details

You can choose to view the label preview, or you can choose to see the label structural information. One useful piece of the information is the label size, so you can make sure the substitute printer has inserted the label material of the same dimensions.

NicePrintQueue Shows All Printer Statuses

The printer status display in NicePrintQueue is not limited to error situations any more. New NicePrintQueue can show all information coming from the bidirectional printer. This feature will increase the status control you have over your label printer.

NiceLabel/NiceDrivers Performance Update (5.2.1)

Due to the internal code optimizations in NiceLabel software and NiceDrivers the labels get printed up to 30% faster, compared to the previous versions.

If the label printing speed is important for you, upgrade your installation to the latest version of NiceLabel and NiceDrivers.

Support for Brazilian Portuguese and Turkish languages (5.2.1)

NiceLabel software now speaks Brazilian Portuguese and Turkish languages. NiceLabel users from these regions can now enjoy label design and printing in their native languages.

Updated Clipart Gallery (5.2.1)

Clipart Gallery was enhanced with many new galleries for recycling, RFID Emblem and GHS (new standard for chemical labels) standards. All together there are over 200 new cliparts, all available in scalable vector format so you can resize the cliparts without quality loss.

Added Herma Stocks (5.2.2)

NiceLabel now has support for label stocks from the label manufacturer Herma. If you are using Herma labels, you can quickly create your label template based on any of the 700 supported Herma formats.

Updated action Open document/program (5.2.3)

You would use the action Open document/program to interface your form with some external application. You would run the external application with command-line parameters to exchange the data. NiceForm and NiceWatch have two new properties in this action:

- **Hide window:** The command window will not be displayed to the user, the program will run in the background.
- **Wait for completion:** The execution of the subsequent actions is delayed until this program completes with the execution. This is useful, when the program provides some data that you will use in the subsequent actions.

What is New in NiceLabel Pro

RFID Enhancements

Support for RFID Electronic Article Surveillance (EAS)

EAS system uses tags that can be disabled by authorized agents. For example, when you purchase an item in the store, the clerk will reprogram the RFID tag and disable the anti-theft protection. Sensors are placed at exit points. If the sensor detects a tagged object with an active tag, an alarm goes off.

With NiceLabel Pro (and appropriate NiceDrivers) you can enable the EAS when encoding the RFID tags.

Support for updated EPC Global Tag Data Standard (TDS)

The EPC Tag Data Standard (TDS) defines standardized EPC tag data, including how it is encoded on the tag and how it is encoded for use in the information systems layers of the EPC Systems Network.

RFID features inside the NiceLabel software have been updated to comply with the new EPCglobal Tag Data Standards version 1.3.1:

- Revision of the header definitions for the EPC encodings
- New field added for the SGLN encoding
- Added new EPM encodings SGTIN-198, SGLN-195, GRAI-170, GIAI-202
- Added support for alphanumeric data for the new encodings

Support for RFID Tag Locking / Unlocking

RFID functionality is expanded with new options for tag locking and unlocking. Some GEN2 tags have advanced locking/unlocking capabilities. You can lock the tag and thus prevent subsequent updates to it. The locking can be permanent, or you can allow the lock to be lifted, the tag updated and then locked again.

The supported locking abilities are defined by the tag's built-in capabilities.

Label Printing Optimizations

Navigation in the Print Preview

With NiceLabel software you can already enjoy the useful ability to preview the printing of your labels on-screen. There is no need to waste the label material; you can see how the labels would print out.

The new feature allows you to scroll through all the labels in the batch you want to print. The navigation toolbar has been enhanced with the **Previous** button. Now you can easily move the focus from preview of one label to the preview of another label.

Fine-tuning the Printing Position (5.2.2)

When printing labels, the printout might be positioned slightly different from one printer to another. This behavior is due to the small differences in hardware as head mounting. The solution is always available by changing the margins and offsets in the label design and/or printer driver.

The real-time limitation is frequently lack of label design skills, or changing the label design or driver properties is simply not an option. To accommodate this need, the new commands for adjusting the offset in X and Y directions are available to be used in JOB command files or in actions with Execute Macro: SETPRINTPARAM PRINTINGOFFSETX and SETPRINTPARAM PRINTINGOFFSETY.

You can easily adjust the position of the label objects with 1-pixel accuracy.

Improved Design Possibilities

Curved Text

With new support for the curved text you can design labels with the text that follows the shape of the defined ellipse. Naturally, you can define text object with variable contents.

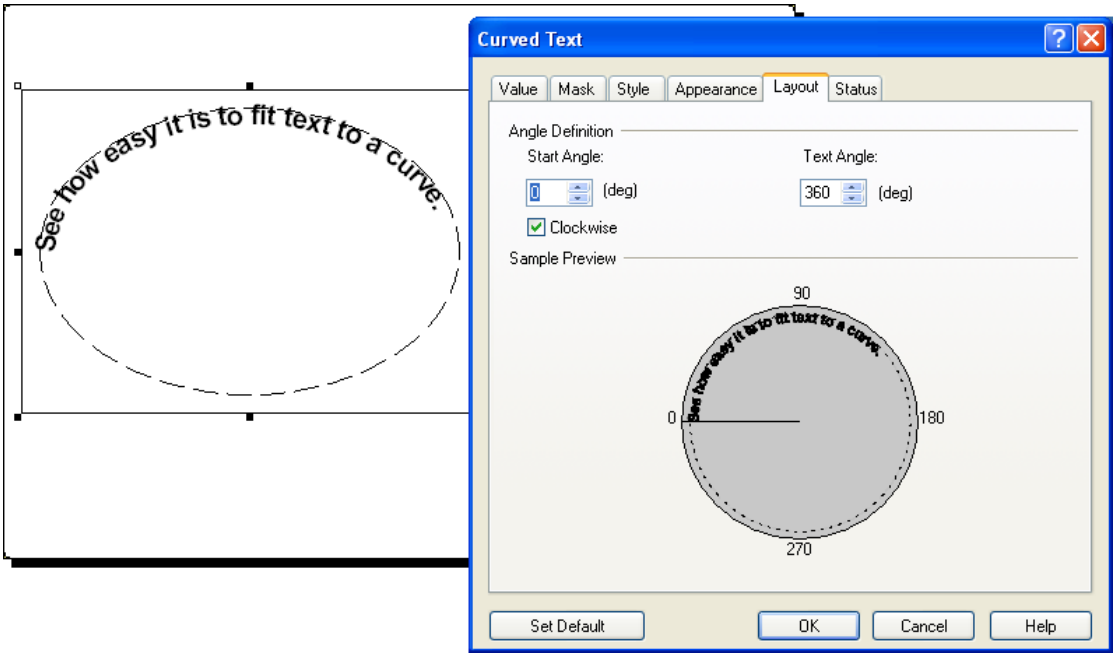

Figure 3: Fit text to the curve you have designed

You are free to design the contour of the ellipse object. You can freely move it on the label, stretch it, resize it, all just with a simple move of a mouse. Furthermore, you can define how the text will fit to the curve and how it will be aligned relatively to the curve.

RTC in GS1-128 function

Some label printers have built-in a real-time-clock (RTC) that always provides information about the current date and time. The benefit using printer's RTC is that you do not have to

send that information from the PC; and more importantly, you can use the actual time of printing on the label, not the time when the label was prepared in the PC.

RTC is mainly used for embedded/off-line label printing, where there is no PC printing labels, but the labels print from other systems or are stored inside the printers.

Support for RTC inside the label printers is quite scarce, so not all of them have support for RTC. For some that do you can use the RTC for text objects on the label. NiceLabel Pro enhances the RTC usability by providing the necessary support also inside the bar codes. The logistic bar code standard GS1-128 deals with dates and times a lot.

Users of GS1-128 will be happy to hear they can use the printer RTC inside their bar codes and make printing more optimized and faster.

Updated Store/Recall Printing Mode with Preview Stream

NiceLabel Pro already provides support for the generation of the optimized print job file. In one of the previous versions you got an easy access to the fast label printing using store/recall functionality. The print file was generated to be stored in the memory of the label printer and then recalled at print-time.

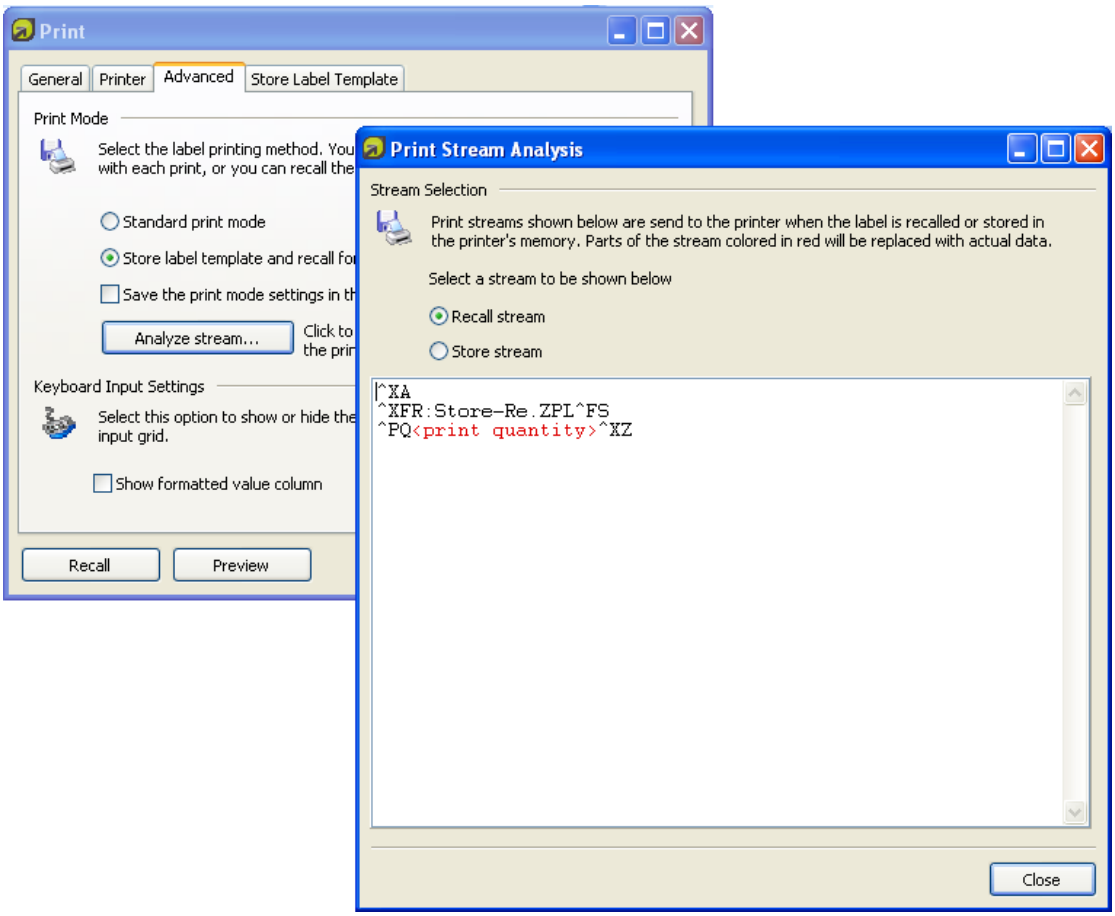

Figure 4: Analyze the data stream (*.PRN) that is sent to the printer for 'label store' and for 'label recall'

This feature provided a huge improvement in responsiveness for integrated label printing. Now you can create the print file in the same way, plus you get an overview of the data that is actually sent to the printer. Yu can review the structure of the ‘store’ and of the ‘recall’ print file.

You can use this feature to learn how to create the optimized print file.

Support for Guidelines

The label designer now integrates the support for guidelines. Guidelines help you design a label based on the specifications coming from some encoding standard. When designing compliance labels, you must make sure the objects are placed on the label on the correct spot and that they are aligned correctly.

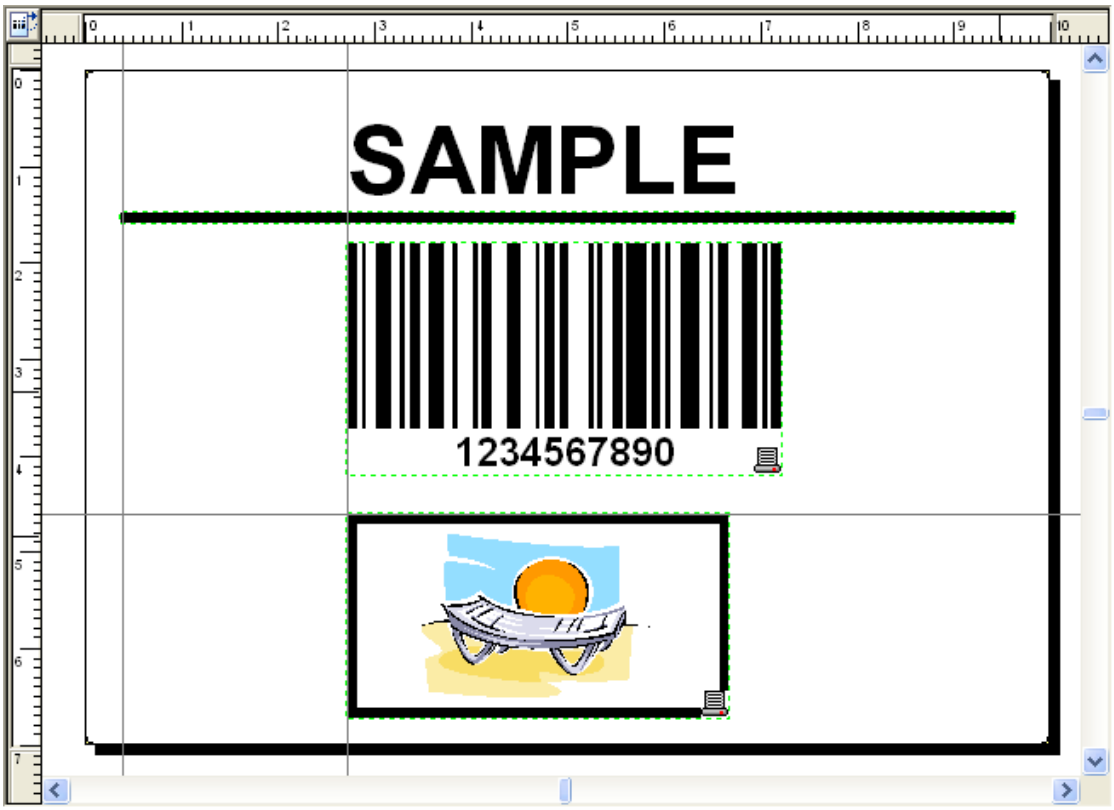

Figure 5: Guidelines help you align objects on the label

Guidelines are a design helper in NiceLabel Pro, which allow you to create compliance labels. You can use the guidelines to adjust the placement of objects as the guidelines provide you with the snap-to-guidelines feature. Whenever you move an object close to the guideline, the object will be dragged to the exact position of the guideline, making object alignment easier.

You can use horizontal and vertical guidelines. As a shortcut, you can simply drag them onto the label from the rulers. The guidelines are saved with the label, so each label – wherever you open it – will display the same guidelines that were used during the label design.

Support for Diagonal Lines

NiceLabel Pro supports the drawing of diagonal lines. You can still use the horizontal and vertical lines as before, but now you also benefit from the diagonal lines.

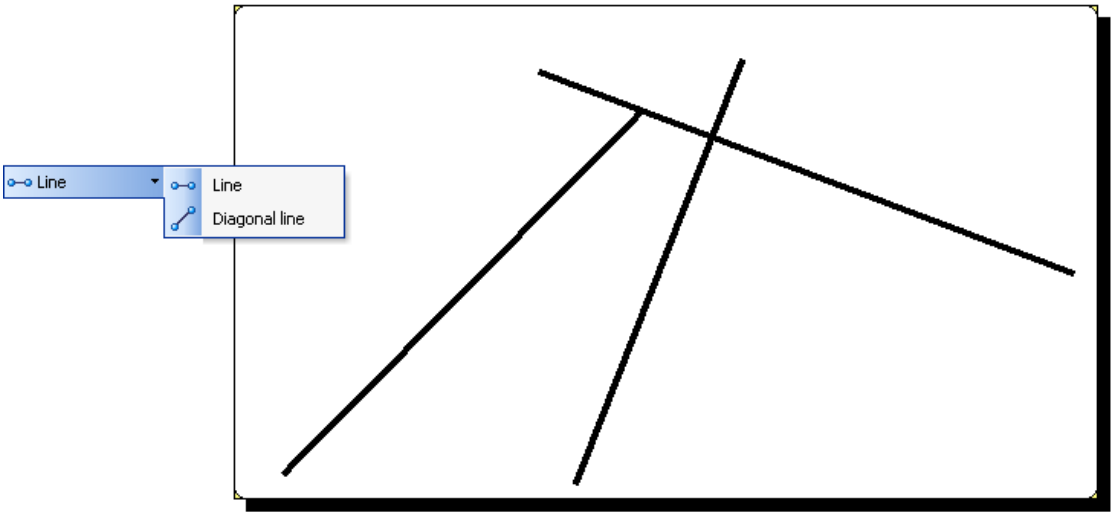

Figure 6: You can draw diagonal lines on your label

The diagonal lines can be drawn at any angle and can use any width.

Ability to Import/Export Label Variables from/to an External File

You can import NiceLabel variables from an external file with the variable definition (*.LVR). This feature makes life easier for label designers that always work with the same set of variables on the label. Now the variable creation could hardly be any easier, you simply browse for the file which contains the variables, and import the variables.

Note: NiceLabel already had support for the variables coming from the Oracle WMS-formatted XML files. The new support enhances the existing functionality.

ASC (FACT) Update

The data-encoding standard ASC (FACT) was updated with new identifiers, updated existing identifiers, and bar code names.

Updated GS1 DataBar support (5.2.2)

GS1 DataBar symbols can carry more information and identify small items than the current EAN/UPC bar code. It enables GTIN identification for fresh variable measure and hard-to-mark products and can carry GS1 Application Identifiers.

All GS1 DataBar bar code variants are now supported, including the GS1 DataBar Expanded Stacked. In addition to encoding Application Identifier (01) GTIN, GS1 DataBar Expanded and GS1 DataBar Expanded Stacked can encode additional GS1 Application Identifiers such as serial number, sell-by-date, expiration date, weight and lot number.

With the new update in NiceLabel software you can easily participate in the GS1 DataBar adoption.

Support for GS1 DataMatrix (5.2.2)

GS1 DataMatrix has been incorporated by GS1 as the standard data carrier alongside the existing GS1 endorsed linear bar codes.

This is a 2-dimensional data matrix symbology enabling the requirements of coding more information, while maintaining a small size; technologies are available for direct part marking and allows error correction to circumvent some degree of physical damage.

The symbology is based on the DataMatrix 2D bar code and supports encoding of GS1-defined structure of the Application Identifiers.

Support for Intelligent Mail Bar codes (5.2.2)

The Intelligent Mail bar code (formerly known as the 4-State Customer Barcode) is the next generation of US Postal Service bar code technology used to sort and track letters and flats. The bar code will replace the existing postal bar code and will help improve deliverability and increase overall efficiency.

The new symbology has various formats and has been referred to with many names (OneCode, IMB and 4-State Bar code). It has also been adopted by several post services.

The new NiceLabel update introduces support for American and Australian variants of the new mail bar code.

Update in HIBC Support (5.2.2)

The HIBC (Health Industry Bar Code) support in NiceLabel has been expanded with the new features from HIBC standard version 2.3. This bar code standard defines the data structure for labeling health care products. NiceLabel introduces new contents provider for the latest HIBC support.

For the list of changes in HIBC version 2.3, visit the Health Industry Business Communication Council's Web site at http://www.hibcc.org and download the new HIBC Supplier Labeling Standard (PDF).

Custom Font Selection Dialog Box (5.2.3)

In the latest Windows operating systems (such as Windows 7) the Microsoft default font selection dialog box does not show the printer internal fonts anymore. Users of design applications that want to use the printer internal functionality (such as NiceLabel) did not see the printer fonts listed in the list of available fonts.

In NiceLabel, users could select the internal printer fonts for their label formats in the Text toolbar. Now, the NiceLabel's font dialog boxes will also show the internal printer fonts.

Useful Enhancements

No Limit for the Number of Installed Printer Drivers

NiceLabel software has no limits regarding the number of printer drivers installed in your Windows operating systems. You can have as many printer drivers installed as you want, NiceLabel will see them all and be able to use them all.

Copy Button in the Error Dialog Box (to Copy Error Messages to Clipboard)

Whenever NiceLabel displays an error message of any sort, there is a 'Copy' button available in the dialog box. You can click the button and copy the entire error message text to the Clipboard. This feature makes it easier to work with the error message as text (send it further to colleagues or support team, etc.)

Support for Quick Creation of a New Empty Label

There is a new keyboard shortcut available for quick creation of the empty label.

When you press the shortcut combination Ctrl+Shift+N, a new label is created without launching the Label Setup Wizard, even if the user interface is configured to automatically launch the wizard.

The label is created for the current default printer, and the label size is set as defined in the printer driver settings.

Variable Height Option for the Rich Text Box object (5.2.2)

The Rich Text Box object in NiceLabel is updated with the new option of Variable height. It helps you handle the variable amounts of data that you receive for this object. The Rich Text Box object could already adapt to the incoming data by changing the font size in order to fit data into the designed frame. That option is known as “Best fit”.

The Variable height introduces another functionality to adapt to the unknown quantity of incoming data. Instead of changing the font size and keeping the object size alone as Best fit does, it will adjust the object’s height according to the data contents. More data will increase the object size; less data will make the object smaller.

For labeling in the textile industry it is often crucial to print one object after another. Variable height could cause the object to extend too much and expand other objects. As a solution, you can enable relative object positioning (an option available for each object) and let NiceLabel redistribute objects to avoid overlapping.

What is New in NiceLabel Suite

The NiceLabel Suite edition includes all of the new features from the NiceLabel Pro edition and the additional Suite-specific features.

NiceForm

TWAIN Support (Images from Webcams and Scanners)

NiceForm introduces the support for acquiring images from any available TWAIN source. The TWAIN sources are graphical devices that provide an image, like Webcams, scanners and similar devices. TWAIN is simply a communication protocol that makes NiceForm understand the data coming from the graphical devices.

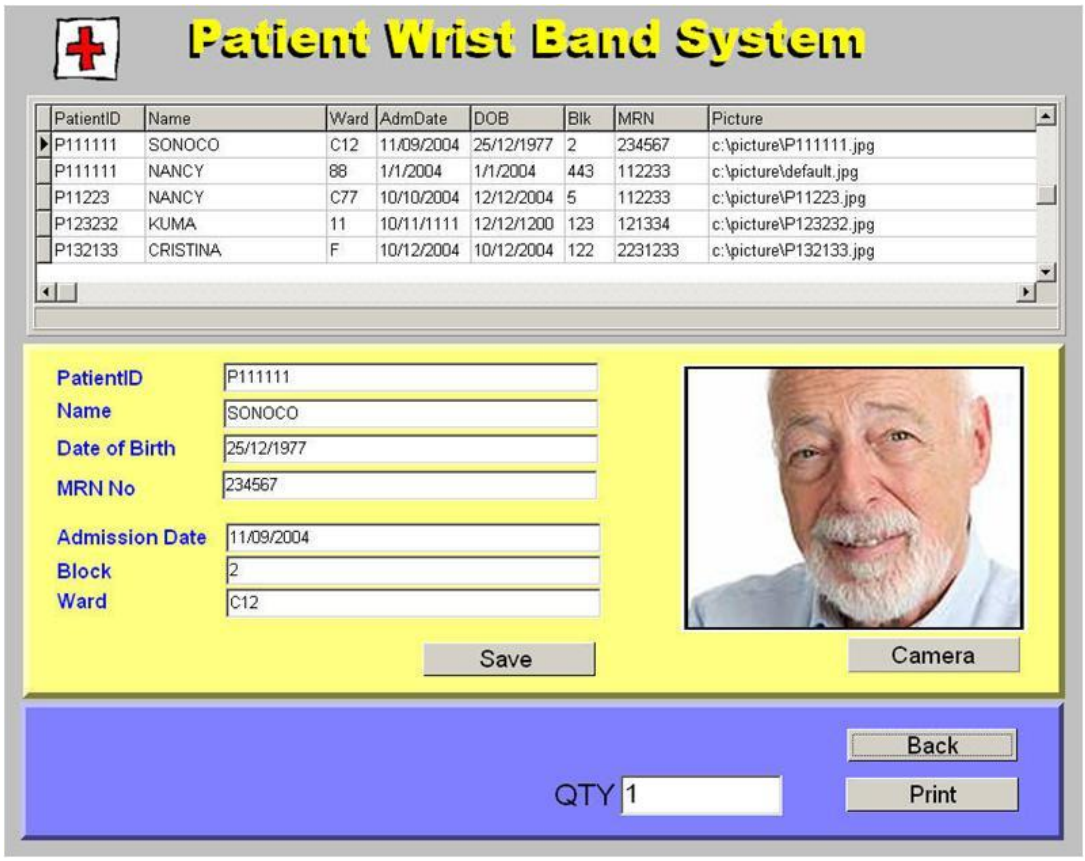

Figure 7: Get the image from the camera and use it for identification

Support for Webcams makes it possible for NiceForm to provide a solution to front-desk and health-care requirements, where you need to register the person/patient, and print out the ID tag that includes the person's photo.

New Action: Send Data to the Serial Port

With this new action you can send the data to a device connected to the available serial (COM) port. You can send the fixed data, or you can send the contents of any variable over to the device.

Updated Action: Browse for File or Folder

With the updated action you can easily allow the user to browse for data in different folders on the local disk or network neighborhood. NiceForm already had the action to browse for file, so the user could already select a file. For advanced use now you can browse for the folder as well.

The user can select some folder and later use this folder elsewhere on the form (with other actions or form objects).

Action Encryption When Locking the Form

NiceForm is a flexible printing-application generator. The form designers often put a lot of their knowledge into their solutions. Because of NiceForm's flexibility and support for Visual Basic scripting that really widens the scope of designed solutions it becomes important to protect the VB script source code from unauthorized eyes.

When you put a lot of effort into the form application and enhance the usability with VB scripts you will welcome the new feature of source code encryption. When you lock your form, the VB script source code is mangled and becomes unreadable.

Distributing the VB script-enhanced NiceForm applications is now trouble-free. Your intellectual work is protected; unauthorized access to the source code is not permitted.

Support for the Events on the Object

The new NiceForm offers a powerful feature for some of the objects to execute actions whenever some event occurs for this object. The types of the supported events are:

- OnFocus – the actions execute when this object is selected (becomes active)
- OnExit – the actions execute when the object is no longer selected (active)
- OnChange / OnFocus – the actions execute when the object's value changes

Each time such event occurs, the pre-defined actions will start. The actions for these events are defined following exactly the same steps as defining actions for the button.

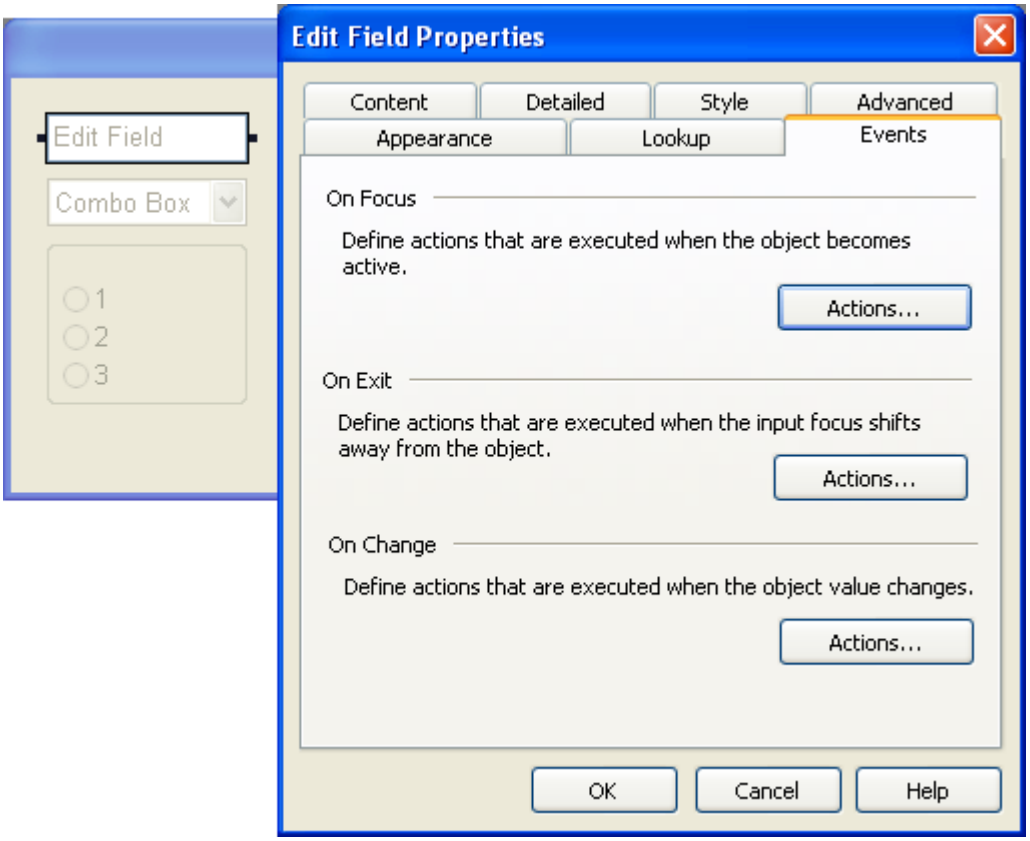

Figure 8: A change in focus or change in object's value can execute actions

Until now the only way to execute actions was when the form started/closed (OnLoad/OnClose events) and with click on the buttons. This new feature gives a tremendous power to the NiceForm users that need to execute actions automatically.

Support for the Events on the Variables

For each variable you can define a set of actions that execute whenever the variable changes the value. Again, as for the support for the events on the objects, this new feature gives a great flexibility and power to the NiceForm users that need more control over the actions within the forms.

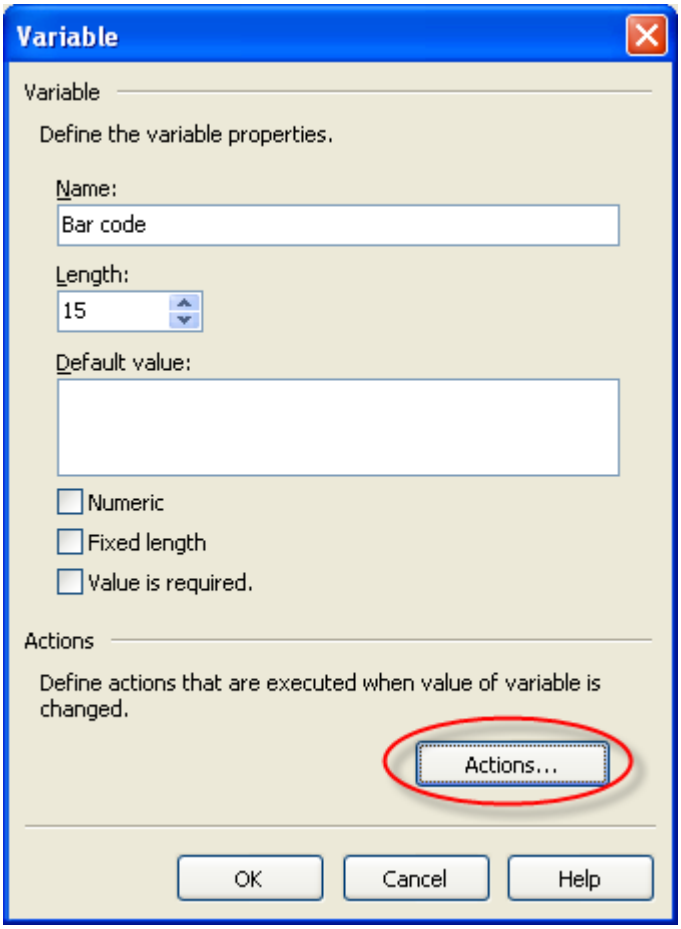

Figure 9: When the variable changes a value, predefined actions can execute

Button Group (5.2.2)

The object Button Group allows the user to define button-selection group. The feature is based on the regular button object, but enhances it with new possibilities. The Button Group is a variable object allowing you to define the number of buttons on-the-fly.

For example: each button within the Button Group can get the value from the database field. As many records you have in the database that many buttons will display in the group. NiceForm tracks which button has been clicked and uses appropriate parameters to execute the correct actions. Each button can execute different actions.

Or, the button group displays the available printer drivers. Click on each button will print label to the associated printer.

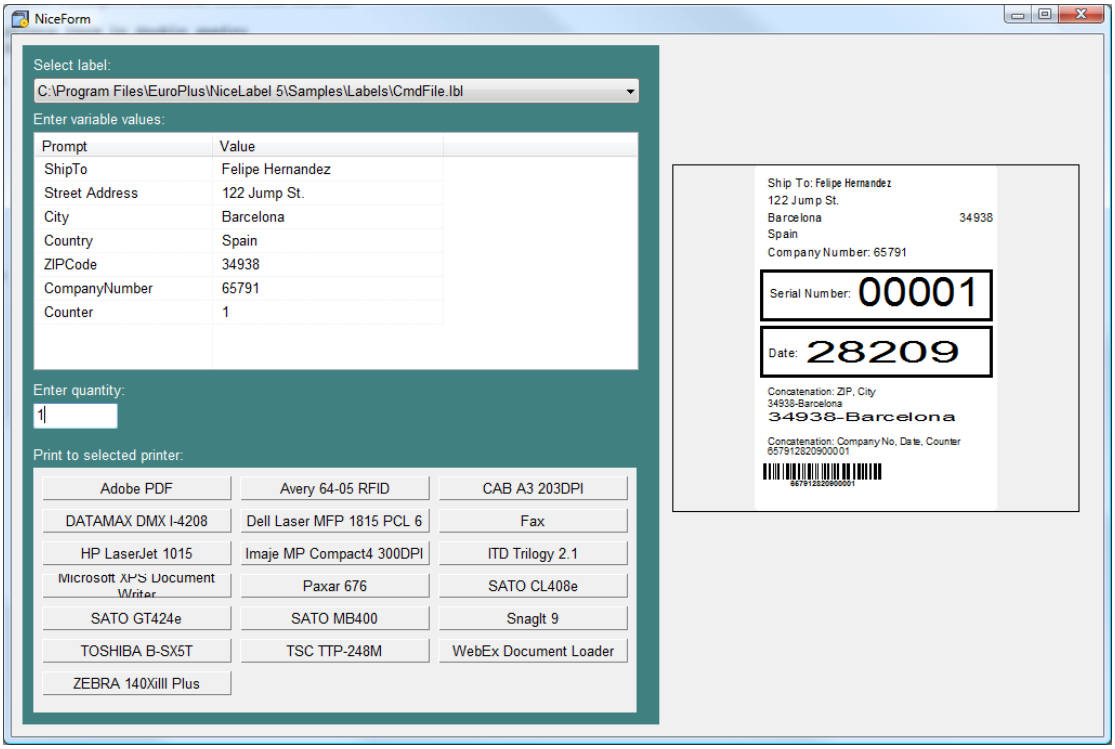

Figure 10: Button group displays a button for each NiceDriver

The new feature enables building of variable NiceForm applications not even possible before.

Word-wrap for Buttons (5.2.2)

The text on the button is no longer limited to single line-only. Coming with the latest release NiceForm supports word wrapping on the button. If you enter too much text to be displayed in one line, the text will be automatically broken into as many lines as necessary to see it all.

Filter to Show Only the Required Variables in the Variable Prompt Object (5.2.2)

The object Variable Prompt displays the variable fields from the connected label. It adapts to each opened label so it is very useful in creating the forms to print multiple label templates, not just one.

By default the object displays all variable fields found in the label. With the new feature you can display only the variable fields you want to display.

Updated action: For every record in a table (5.2.3)

The existing action **For every selected record in a table** executed the defined actions for every selected record in a database table. Now, the action has a new name **For every record in a table**, and two options to choose from:

- Execute actions for **all** records, or
- Execute actions for **selected** records (the functionality from previous versions)

New action: Execute SQL Statement (5.2.3)

The action gives you an ability to take control over the data in the SQL server. You can execute standard SQL commands to select records from a database, insert new records, update or delete existing records. The prerequisite for using the actions is familiarity with the SQL programming and using commands such as SELECT FROM, INSERT INTO, UPDATE and DELETE.

New action: Import Data into Database

This action will take the formatted data from the text file (CSV) and upload it into the defined SQL data destination (MS SQL server, other SQL servers, MS Access database, etc.)

The structure of the CSV file must match the structure of fields in a database table. The mapping is based on the field names, so value from a CSV is stored in a field of the same name.

Note: The action will only run in forms running on the Web. You must have the product NiceLabel Portal to be able to use the action.

Events OnClick available for some objects (5.2.3)

Traditionally, you can run the action in the NiceForm applications by clicking the button. Later NiceForm releases introduced other means of action execution, from OnForm Load, OnFormClose, OnFocus and OnTime to OnVariableChange.

You can execute your action also with a click on the objects such as Text, Picture and Label Preview. For example, clicking the label preview can execute printing of the same label. You no longer need to place an extra button to execute printing.

Support for Python Programming (5.2.3)

Python programming allows you to include new functionality that is not already available in NiceForm. You can add your own Python functions and procedures that will enhance the form possibilities. On each form you can make a selection of your scripting language. Now you can choose between Visual Basic Script and Python.

Note: At this time Python scripting is available in NiceForm only. It is not available in NiceLabel Pro and NiceWatch.

NiceWatch

Graphic Display of Print Thread Activity

NiceWatch is the middleware integration module from the NiceLabel Suite edition. NiceWatch allows you to add label-printing functionality to an existing system which currently lacks a printing functionality. The NiceWatch included in the Standard Series does the job with one print engine that handles all the incoming data traffic and prints out labels to different printers.

Because of the singular print engine, you can experience a bottleneck in case of high-throughput printing demands.

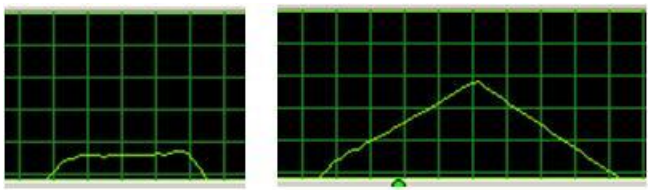

Figure 11: See the number of jobs waiting in NiceWatch internal queue

The new feature will show all activities coming through this single print engine. You can monitor the number of print jobs processed in a given time frame and see how NiceWatch behaves under different circumstances.

If the number of print jobs waiting in the queue list does not begin to drop, you're putting too much stress on the print engine. When NiceWatch included in the Standard Series is not powerful enough for you demands, you can start looking at the more powerful middleware integration server with NiceWatch Enterprise.

Processing the Triggers that Appeared While NiceWatch was Offline

Traditionally, NiceWatch triggers monitor the defined events when the NiceWatch server is running. All events that took place while the NiceWatch server was offline (paused or otherwise inactive) were ignored and not processed.

For file triggers, a new functionality is available, which allows you to execute actions based on all modified files in the monitored folder. Whenever a file changes while NiceWatch was offline, it will still be processed and the appropriate actions will be executed the next time NiceWatch is active.

Trigger Print Preview

NiceWatch enables the user to perform a print preview, which displays the preview of the label print job. For example, if you work with file trigger, you can browse for the sample trigger file and preview the label printing on screen.

You will see all the labels in the print job (preview on-screen), values of all variables and the NiceWatch log file (as usually seen in the log pane).

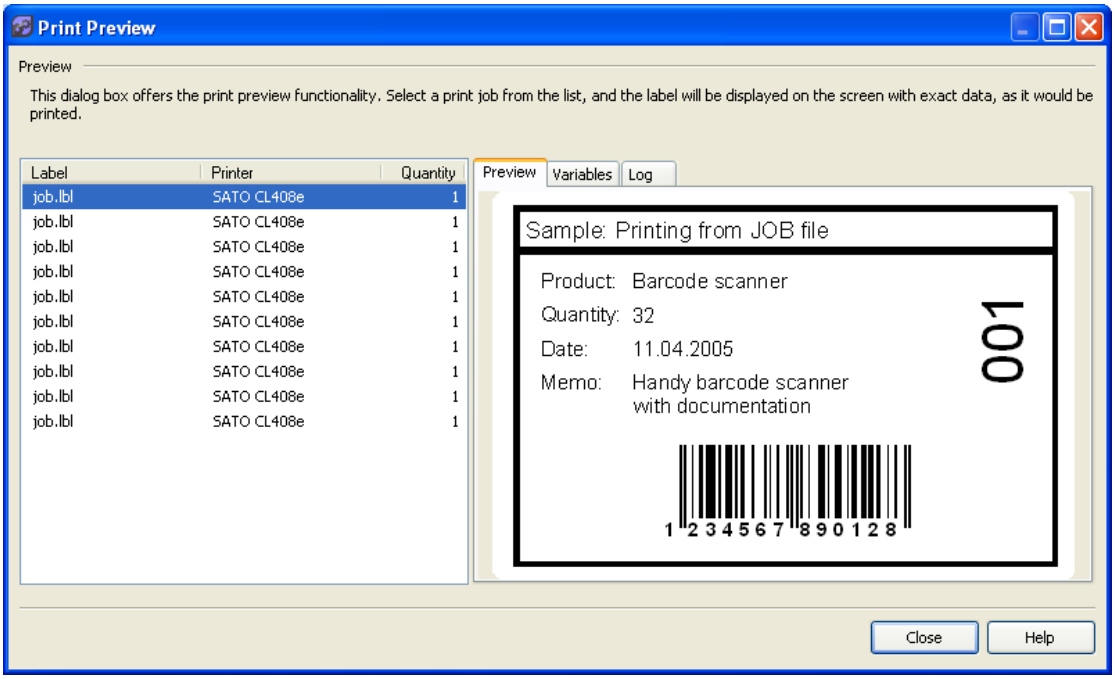

Figure 12: You can preview the result of any trigger in a window

Trigger print preview is a great feature whenever you want to test your trigger settings and action definition. You can see the labels on-screen as they would be printed. In case of any problems, you will be alerted and will see error description on the log section.

New Action: Send Data to the Serial Port

With this new action you can send the data to a device connected to the available serial (COM) port. You can send the fixed data, or you can send the contents of any variable over to the device.

Ignore Failures in the Trigger Data

Whenever an error is detected in the incoming trigger data, NiceWatch will report an error and stop executing the actions, even if the remainder of the actions is OK. The error message is shown in the log pane, and alternatively, you can enable the Error Event and store the data in a backup location for analysis at a later time.

There is a new feature available in NiceWatch when processing the trigger data. If there is any problem with the data (for example, incorrect label name is provided, a non-existent printer is used, the label variable value is too long etc.), NiceWatch can ignore just this single erroneous job and continue with the next one.

The new feature is very useful in cases, when you do not want the remainder of the data to be ignored. This is usual in cases of text files, where each row provides data for one label printing action.

Export Trigger to File / Import from File

When defining triggers in NiceWatch, you already had a possibility to copy/paste triggers. The new version goes one step beyond and allows you to export the trigger definition to the XML file, move it to some other computer with NiceWatch and import the definition there.

Trigger-based copying from one NiceWatch server to another is now possible without any hassle.

Manual Execution of the Trigger

Whenever you design your trigger in NiceWatch you can now execute the trigger with a single click with a mouse. This is a great shortcut for testing the integrity of your trigger definition and its actions.

You do not have to wait until the next time interval the files are checked (if you are using a file trigger); you can just click and execute the trigger right away.

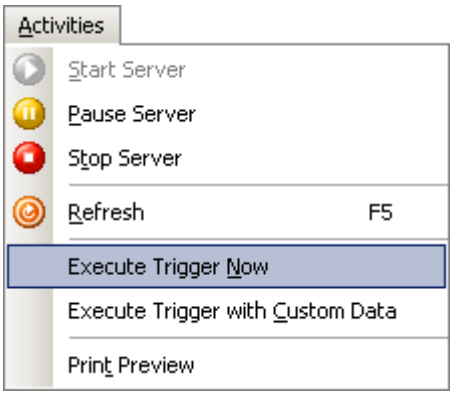

Figure 13: You can execute the trigger at any time and test its behavior without waiting for the event to occur

There is also a more complex version of this new feature. Alternatively, you can point to some other text file that provides the data for the trigger (not the original monitored file). NiceWatch will execute the trigger and use the data from the selected file as if the original trigger just received a new data. This testing ability is available for all trigger types, not just the file trigger.

Action Encryption when Locking the Trigger Configuration

NiceWatch is a flexible middleware integration module. The integrators often put a lot of their knowledge to their solutions. Because of the flexibility of NiceWatch and support for Visual Basic scripting that really widens the scope of designed solutions it becomes important to protect the VB script source code from unauthorized eyes.

When you put a lot of effort into the form application and enhance the usability with VB scripts you will welcome the new feature of source code encryption. When you lock your form, the VB script source code is mangled and becomes unreadable.

Distributing the VB script-enhanced NiceWatch triggers is now trouble-free. Your intellectual work is protected; unauthorized access to the source code is not permitted.

Encrypted Email Password

When you define email triggers, you must also enter the password to access the defined email mailbox. The password is encrypted and not stored as plain text anymore.

Improved Text Database Filter

You use the text database filter whenever the incoming trigger data is formatted in a text database-like structure (like CVS files with delimiters between the field values, or data files

with columns of fixed width). The filter can map the data fields with label variables, creating a link between data and label template.

The text database filter has been enhanced to understand different end-of-line terminology. In DOS and Windows the end-of-line is formatted with CR/LF characters (Carriage Return/Line Feed). The filter also understands the text files formatted on Unix/Linux systems (LF only) or Mac computers (CR only).