LOGIX SYSTEMS - WINCIS VERSION .94 BETA
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02/25/93 LAL Version .94 Beta Changes
THE MOST COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. How Do I Register the Program when the Registration Menu is grayed out?

Well the answer to that question currently is that we aren't accepting registrations or dinero for the beta versions of WinCIS. Our objective is make sure that the product is bullet proof and performs to your satisfaction before we accept money for something we want you to be happy with. That's why WinCIS is a beta shareware product. When we are certain that it is stable enough and can be consider useful by a majority of its users then we'll create a version 1.0 and hopefully earn a few pesos but until then enjoy and let us know what you like and what you don't.

2. What's a view? Or why not call it a group or a ...

I don't know if there is any term that is best. However once you get used to the idea or a view it's fairly straight forward. A view is nothing more than a logical collection of forums. On your hard disk files, are grouped or organized under directories. In WinCIS forums are organized under a view. On disk a file can only reside in one directory unless you make a copy of it in another directory. In WinCIS forums can belong to more than one view but unlike your hard disk they are not copies. The same forum can be accessed by different views. Why? Because CIS keeps online one set of statistics associated with your user id for example you only have one high message counter. So why have views? Well it simply lets you organize forums in a manner that makes the most sense to you regardless of how they are named or organized on CIS. For example you can create views for software forums, hardware forums, vendor forums, or forums that you access once a week, once a month, or once in a blue moon.

3. What's the point of the radio buttons VIEW or FORUM above those strange looking buttons?

The Do View or Do Forum radio buttons control the scope of the ACTIONS or MESSAGE buttons. When you bring up WinCIS it displays a list of forums within a view. When you press the ACTIONS or MESSAGE button WinCIS will attempt to perform some automated functions by logging on to CIS. The radio buttons indicate to the program if you want to perform those automated functions against a single forum or for all of the forums currently listed in the view.

4. What's difference between the MESSAGES, ACTIONS, and MAIL Buttons?

All of these buttons perform some automated functions by logging onto CIS and executing a script.

MAIL simply logs on and read or sends mail through your personal file area on CIS.This of course depends on the fact that you have received mail or have created mail to be sent. After do this the program logs off. No forums in the view are entered.

MESSAGES will also read and or send any outgoing mail. It then will go to each forum listed in the view (or to a single forum depending on the state of the do view/forum radio button) and read any waiting messages addressed to you, read any new messages, and/or scan for new messages in specific message sections.

The message sections that are to be read or scanned for new messages is determined by how three fields you set in the FORUM/PROCESSING options screen (you can also double click on a forum to bring up this screen). There you will find are three fields in a frame which contains a icon that looks suspiciouly like the icon on the message button. The message sections that you list in the read or quick scan fields will be searched for new messages. Obviously the ones specified for read will be read and the ones specified for quickscan will only retrieve headers that you intend peruse and mark latter.

ACTIONS will only perform the automated functions listed for each forum or view (again this is based on thhe scope defined by of the do view/forum radio button). As you select options to be performed such as library scans, reading message thread, etc you'll note that the forum list will be updated with descriptive text such as Lib(Scan) to indicate which action needs to be scheduled and performed. The scheduled actions can be overridden using the FORUM/PROCESSING screen. In any event the options that are checked will be performed by the program when this button is pressed.

5. What is the stuff in the WinCIS.INI file?

The **[PGM OPTIONS]** section of the WinCIS.INI contains parameters that control the behavior of WinCIS and might be useful in the event you are experiencing problems. The following describes parameters which are not controlled by the application and which may modify using any simple text editor such as NOTEPAD:

A set of these parameters control the communication timing routines:

CommandRecognitionTime=.25

WinCIS recognizes certain characters sequences as being prompts from CIS. For example most CIS prompts end with an exclamation mark as in "Forum!"   If the program finds a string that satisfies it's requirement for a CIS prompt, it pauses slightly to see if CIS sends more data before accepting the string as a valid CIS prompt. The CommandRecognitionTime parameter controls the length of that pause.

Why the pause you ask? Well if for example a message contains a character sequence that the program recognizes then the pause is should be long enough such that CIS will continue sending data within this timeout period. In version .94 this is could only effect email since when in a forum WinCIS can further filter the prompts by the special character it sets in the Forum OPT command.

MinimumModemCharDelay=.25

Some modems cannot correctly respond to local commands if they are sent too quickly to the port. This parameter controls the delay between characters when sending commands to the modem.

MaximumModemResponseTime=10

As you might gather from the name. How long should the program wait for the modem to respond to a command.

MaximumCISResponceTime=90

How long should the program wait for CIS to respond to a command?

ErrorMessageDelay=4

If an error is detected in the script file how long should the pause be for your to review it before continuing to the next script command?

AnnimateDelay=.5

The terminal screen has a options labeled Animate. When selected the program will pause for this amount of time between each instruction. If you also specify the debug option then each script command is displayed in the status area of the terminal screen.

LogonCisType="INT"

This is appended to your userid at logon time to indicate the terminal type to CIS. The default if not specified is TTY.

ForumDirectorys=0

In version .93 the default directories could be overridden at the forum level. When editing the forum there was a settings menu option that would allow you to specify overriding directories for the given forum. In case you didn't specify the overrides the program would copy the default directories to the forum defaults. Then If you moved the WinCIS files to a new directories and deleted the old directories then you would have to change the program defaults as well as the individual forum defaults in order for WinCIS to correctly operate.

As a default<g> in .94 it is only necessary to change the program default directories. The forum level default directories are no longer examined. However for those of you who prefer the old method you can set the ForumDirectorys value to 1. and the old .93 rules will be in effect.

MsgMaxTtlLen=24
MsgMaxLine=70
MsgSplitAtLine=94
MsgSplitAtChar=2000
MsgSplitChars=0123456789*-+=_><\/{}][?#;'.,!|

MailMaxTtlLen=24
MailMaxLine=70
MailSplitAtLine=950
MailSplitAtChar=40000
MailSplitChars=0123456789*-+=_><\/{}][?#;'.,!|

These parameters control the formatting of email and messages when sending to CIS in standard format.

Messages that are sent to CIS in standard format can seem to behave strangely until you understand what is occurring.

The Message editor in WinCIS allows you to enter free form text without the concern of where lines begin or end. The text is word wrapped as you enter it. Different screen resolutions and fonts allow you to enter more text than can actually be sent in a single line to CIS. Because of this the program needs to have some rules when actually posting the message on CIS.

MsgMaxTtlLen and MailMaxTtlLen define the maximum number of characters that may be entered as the subject of a message. As distributed these are the maximum values defined by CIS.

MsgMaxLine and MailMaxLine define the maximum line length to use on CIS. WinCIS will word

wrap lines of your message to this line length when actually posting a message sent as standard.

MsgSplitAtLine and MailSplitAtLine define the maximum number of lines that can be contained in a single message. The program will split a message containing more than this number of lines into two or more messages.

MsgSplitAtChar and MailSplitAtChar define the maximum number of characters that can be contained in a single message. The program will split a message containing more than this number of characters into two or more messages.

MsgSplitChars and MailSplitChars define special characters to control when lines can be concatenated. Basically the program will concatenate lines until it sees a blank line. So if two or three lines appear without an intervening blank line then all of the lines are concatenated and word wrapped into lines of MsgMaxLine length. However when your message contains information to be presented in a columnar format, then you don't want those lines to be concatenated to the preceding lines. In this case you would want WinCIS to send each line separately. To allow for this the program will recognize any line that begins with one of these characters as a line that should not be concatenated. In addition the program always considers a line that begins with a blank to be a line which should not be concatenated.

Finally you should know that when receipient or your message reads that message from CIS it may be again be reformat by CIS. Herein lies another possible problem. The receipient's screen width as defined by CIS is based on user settings. This of course can be larger or smaller than the line length that was used to actually post the message. If it's larger then there is no problem and the format will look normal to the receipient. If the width is smaller than then the message will appear a little strange to the receipient. Here's a common scenario:

User A sends a message to User B. The message contains 80 character lines. That look something line This:

This is a long line that can contain up to 80 characters which is exactly what it doesn't.
This is a long line that can contain up to 80 characters which is exactly what it doesn't.
This is a long line that can contain up to 80 characters which is exactly what it doesn't.

User B logs on as a TTY terminal and CIS assumes that the maximum line length is 72 characters per line. When User B reads the message CIS sends it as a series of 70 character lines followed by 8 character lines. In other words the message looks strangely line this:

This is a long line that can contain up to 80 characters which is exactly what
it doesn't.
This is a long line that can contain up to 80 characters which is exactly what
it doesn't.
This is a long line that can contain up to 80 characters which is exactly what
it doesn't.

You can control your line length in CIS by adding a line to the WinCIS.TPL as described latter in the document. For example you may want to define your CIS line length as 80 while leaving your MsgMaxLine set at 70. In this way you can properly see messages sent at 80 while insuring that those who receive your messages at 72 will see them correctly. However keep this in mind as well, in order for you to proper see 80 character lines with a fixed pitch font you must run at a high screen resolution (800X600 for example). Since at 640X480 windows can only display about 78 characters per line when using a fixed pitch font.

; These values are the defaults required for WinFAX Profession Version 3.0 for Windows.

FaxCheck=1

FaxStatusDDE=REQUEST|FAXMNG|CONTROL|STATUS|
FaxEnableDDE=EXECUTE|FAXMNG|CONTROL||GOACTIVE|
FaxDisableDDE=EXECUTE|FAXMNG|CONTROL||GOIDLE|
FaxActive=ACTIVE|
FaxBusy=BUSY|
FaxIdle=IDLE|REQUEST_ACTIVE|
FaxTimeOut=5
FaxBusyDelay=5

WinCIS can share a FAX modem with programs that support DDE commands such as WinFAX Pro version 3.0. Such programs allow WinCIS to establish a DDE session to acquire and release the modem in order to perform it's online functions. WinCIS will only use the modem to perform its online functions, thereafter it will release the modem to the fax software to allow incomming and outgoing faxes to be sent and or received. WinCIS will not interfere with a FAX in progress instead you will be informed that the fax is busy and be requested to try again later.

FaxCheck enables or disables checking within WinCIS for fax software that allows modem sharing via DDE conversations. If you are using WinFAX Profession Version 3.0 for Windows you should can set the value of this parameter to 1.   If you set the value to 1 and are not using this type of software no harm will result since WinCIS recognize that the session cannot be established.

FaxStatus, FaxEnable, and FaxDisable represent the DDE commands WinCIS must issue in order to enable, disable, or determine status from the fax software. The format of these entries is such as to allow different commands to be issued for different software. The defaults in the WinCIS.INI are those required by WinFax Pro Version 3.0.

FaxBusy, FaxIdle, FaxActive are al strings that represent different states of the fax software.

FaxTimeOut is the DDE timeout value in seconds

FaxBusyDelay is the amount of time (in seconds) that WinCIS should wait in case the software is busy when it is requested to release the modem.

The **[WINDOW SIZING]** section of the WinCIS.INI contains parameters that control the screen fonts and size used for certain areas of the program. There are two types of entries in this area. One defines the screen size of specific panels. The screen size entries are updated each time you resize a window so that the next time you enter that panel it is displayed at that size.   The other type of entry describes the text font to be used for specific controls.   The only type of entry that can be changed are the ones that control font. Using these entries you can control the font displayed for the Terminal Window, Message Editor, and Forum Description.

The format of these entries are described in the WinCIS.INI file.

The **[MAIL BUTTONS]** section of the WinCIS.INI contains parameters that control the icons used by WinCIS to display the "MAIL" button under the "DO COMPUSERVE" frame of the main panel. This button changes icons based on the presence of new mail received from CIS as well as if you have created an mail to be sent. There are four possible states and hence only four entries:

NoMail=E:\VB2\ICONS\MAIL20A.ICO
Show if no mail has been received and no mail is to be sent. The DEFAULT is an empty mailbox with the flag down.

SndMail=E:\VB2\ICONS\MAIL20D.ICO
Show if no mail has been received and there is mail is to be sent. The DEFAULT is an empty

mailbox with the flag up.

RcvMail=E:\VB2\ICONS\MAIL20B.ICO
Show if mail has been received but there is no mail is to be sent. The DEFAULT is a mailbox with letters and the flag down.

SndRcvMail=E:\VB2\ICONS\MAIL20C.ICO
Show if mail has been received and there is mail is to be sent. The DEFAULT is a mailbox with letters and the flag up.

6. What is this stuff in the WinCIS.TPL file?

WinCIS automates CIS online functions by interactively allowing you to define the actions that you want to perform offline. As you specify those actions the program records them in various control blocks and files. Prior to going online it reads the actions and generates a script file of commands. The script file that it generates is named WinCIS.SCR. The Terminal program reads the script file and executes the commands to be executed in order to honor your requests.

In order to build a script file we could have chosen to place all of the generated commands internally in the program. Unfortunately this means that you would have very little control in what those commands could contain. It also would mean that if CIS changed the format of it's commands we would have to change the program before you could take advantage of them.

Instead we opted to make the command structure of CIS commands external to the program and so we created a file called WinCIS.TPL. This file serves as a template of the CIS commands to be issued in order to perform online actions. In many ways is looks just like an .INI file and in fact you can modify it with a simple text editor such as Notepad. It contains a number of [sections] and within each section a number of script commands. Each action or function that you specify in WinCIS has an associated [section] within the WinCIS.TPL file. The program identifies an action, locates the appropriate section and merges parameters with the template in order to generate a script of commands. For example in the preceding Q&A we talked about changing the CIS screen width after logging onto CompuServe. The PROLOG section contains commands that are to be generate immediately after logon to CIS. By adding a line here we can change the terminal with to say 80 characters per line as in:

[PROLOG]
...
; Wait for a prompt
WAIT !
SEND SET WIDTH 80^M

There are a lot of examples of the script commands available in WinCIS contained in the WinCIS.TPL file. So if you are looking for a way to code your own WinCIS scripts you may want to look here. Also you can look at the script generated as a result of performing online actions by checking the WinCIS.SCR file.

7. What is syntax of the WinCIS Script Language?

Well the syntax is actually a superset of the TAPCIS language. Which means that if you already have a TAPCIS script you can probably use it as is in WinCIS. However WinCIS contains quite a few additional capabilities not found in the TAPCIS script language. Your best bet at this point is to look at the notes contained in the WinCIS.TPL file for the structure of WinCIs scripts. Otherwise you'll have to wait for the docs.

8. (MESSAGE/SELECT) How do I look at Messages after they have disappeared?

Well messages don't actually disappear. WinCIS always appends messages to the FORUM.MSG file. The problem may be in how you access those messages. The FORUM/MESSAGE/LATEST menu item only displays the messages that were successfully downloaded from the last online access.

Since the message file is nothing more than a large text file there needs to be a way to scan them to locate the messages that you are interested in finding. To that end there is a FORUM/MESSAGE/SELECT menu option that allows you to specify selection criteria in order to access the message files.

The selection screen can certainly be considered daunting. But it gives you quite a bit of flexibility considering that it allows you to perform wildcard searches. While bringing up a list of message titles is certainly possible once the messages have been selected the subjects are in a pull down list sorted within section anyway.

The wildcard searches are similar to DOS file wildcards for example:

To Scan for messages containing the word "WINCIS" in the subject:

WINCIS

To Scan for messages beginning with the word "WINCIS" in the subject:

WINCIS*

To Scan for messages ending with the word "WINCIS" in the subject:

*WINCIS

To Scan for messages containing W??CIS in the subject:
W??CIS

To Scan for messages containing WINCIS or COMM or SCRIPTS in the subject:

WINCIS;*COMM*;*SCRIPTS*

The program must scan sequentially through the file to locate messages unless it is searching on an indexed field. Currently the only indexed field is the Date Received. Therefore to perform the fastest searches include this field as part of the selection criteria.

Finally the message file can contain more messages than is possible to display in it's pull down list therefore the program will display at most 1000 messages at a time. If you have a need to select more than this many messages you many need to run multiple selections.

9. (MESSAGE/PURGE) I have deleted messages but the .MSG file is still the same size.

The MESSAGE/PURGE option physically deletes records from the file. When you delete a record it is simply flagged in the .MSG file. Once deleted you cannot recall the message. However it still occupies space on disk. In order to reduce the size of the .MSG file you must occasionally purge deleted records.

Purging records consists of setting specific selection criteria and then sequentially passing the file to remove records. If you don't specify any additional selection criteria the program will only remove records that you have flagged for deletion from the message editor. If you do specify criteria any records who meet that criteria will be deleted as well. The format of the selection criteria is the same as described above for selecting message via the MESSAGE/SELECT

option.

The program always creates a .BAK file of the original input so that if a problem occurs you can rename the .BAK file and recover your messages.

10. I tried to do a library scan in forum XYZ and when WinCIS tried to enter Library 1 it got an error because the library is private, so the program stopped and logged off CIS.

Most forums on CIS allow the use of library 1 however a few do not. WinCIS attempt to reduce the number of script commands by always selecting a single library in order to perform library scans from. Since the new CIS commands allow you to specify the libraries in which you want the scan to occur there is no longer a need to switch libraries between catalog scans. As a default the program always chooses library 1 from which to perform its scan. This can be overridden in those few instances for which a sysop has opted to restrict the use of library 1. Simply edit the FORUM.INI file using a simple text editor such as NOTEPAD. This file looks and behaves just like any other windows .INI file. Each [section] defines a forum and within a given section are parameters for a given forum. In this case you'll need to add a parameter to the forum having a problem with library 1. So begin by locating the forum section and then add a line as follows:

[FORUMNAME]
...
...
DefaultLibrary=2

In this example we change the default library used by WinCIS for FORUMNAME to library 2. Since this is tied to a specific forum it only affects the named forum all other forums continue to use library 1. The order in relation to the other forum option is not important. Neither is the case in which you enter the option.