



Merged CHMs - Absolute Path Problem

BACKGROUND

When CHMs are merged it is important that the HHP file in the parent project does not contain any path information. If it does, as soon as you place the CHMs on another PC where the path is no longer the correct path, then the merge no longer works. (Test that search works for a simple test.)

Some users have reported that prior to RoboHelp 9 it was necessary to edit the HHP file but then the merge worked as it should. The problem they found with RoboHelp 9 was that if they edited the HHP file, the edit got overwritten so that the merge would not work on other machines. Karen Graf was one of those who reported the problem and we both worked on resolving it.

Below are details of steps I performed with new projects and on projects that did show an absolute path in the parent project's HHP file. The projects with an absolute path came from projects I had created before the correct steps were identified and from projects that Karen had upgraded from earlier versions

Combined they seem to prove that it is possible to create a merge from RoboHelp 9 without an absolute path.

NEW PROJECTS

After first identifying the required steps, I repeated them pausing at various stages to take a zipped copy of the setup before proceeding. This enables anyone who needs to follow the steps to see my progress at each stage and to check theirs.

The project numbers below are in the zip files that were created before moving on to the next iteration. Thus 001 is how the files were after performing steps 1 - 6.

You can create your own projects to prove the steps in 001 work as stated or open 001 and check the HHP file created is as stated.

Then use your own projects or those in 001 to work through the steps that follow.

001

1. Create three projects named Parent, Child_1 and Child_2. (Never use spaces in CHMs that will be merged.)
2. Compile the child projects to a folder outside the parent - named Generate.
3. Add those CHMs to the parent TOC. Allow RoboHelp to copy those CHMs to the parent project.
4. Compile the parent to the Generate folder.
5. Close all projects.
6. Check the HHP file. It should show the filename only, no path information.

002

7. Delete the CHMs from the root of the parent.
8. Open the parent in RoboHelp.
9. Compile again - parent only.
10. Close the parent.
11. Check the HHP file. It should show the filename only, no path information.

At this point what you have is a working merge with no path information and no CHMs in the root of the parent.

003

12. Open the parent.
13. Delete the references to Child 1 and 2 from the TOC. (Previously this seemed to trigger the path being added to the filename.)
14. Compile the parent again.
15. This causes the TOCs of the child projects to not appear. The child topics are however still found by the search.
16. Close the parent.
17. Check the HHP. It should show the filename only, no path information.
18. Add the child TOCs back. Note: Again browsed to the CHMs in the Generate folder.
19. Compile the parent again.
20. Close the parent.
21. Check the HHP file. It should show the filename only, no path information.
22. Open Child 1 and add the word Redrabbbit to the topic.
23. Compile Child 1.
24. Close Child 1.
25. Open parent.chm and search on Redrabbbit. It should be found.
26. Close parent.chm.
27. Open the parent HHP. Whilst it should not have changed, check to be 100% sure.
28. Open the parent project.
29. Add a link to each child topic. RoboHelp forces the import of the child CHMs. (There is a way of creating links that does not do that.)
30. Close the parent.
31. Delete the two child projects from the root of the parent.
32. Open the parent and compile.
33. Close the parent.
34. Check merged toc, links and search working in the compiled merge.
35. Check the HHP file. It should show the filename only, no path information.

A previous similar test did introduce the path name after Step 13 in Test 003. This leaves me wondering whether the change is the result of running these tests after Service Release 9.0.1 was applied.

In the absence of anyone getting different results with the service release applied, I have to conclude this method works for merges created in RoboHelp 9.

PROJECT WITH AN ABSOLUTE PATH

The above is fine for someone creating a new merge in RoboHelp 9 but what about someone who has a merge with the absolute path?

Karen Graf published some steps on the RoboHelp forum that were very similar to steps that I had come up with. Some of her steps are unique to her particular project and those have been excluded below. Karen's full steps are repeated later in this document.

1. Delete the parent project's CPD file.
2. Using Notepad, remove the [MERGE FILES] section from the parent project's HHP file.
3. Using Notepad, remove all <file> entries from the <mergedhelpfiles> section in the parent project's XPJ.
4. Double-click the XPJ file to load the project into RoboHelp 9 or browse to the XPJ file from RoboHelp. The important point is to use the XPJ file to open the project.

5. In the TOC pod, add all CHM's that are part of the merged help system, as follows:
 - a. Click the New Merged Project button.
 - b. Browse to location of a child project CHM, select it and click OK.
 - c. Allow RoboHelp to copy the child CHM to the parent project.
 - d. Repeat steps (a) through (c) for each CHM file that will be part of the merge.
6. Save the project, and compile the HTML help.
7. The [MERGE FILES] section of your project's HHP file should now contain only the names of the merged CHM files, not the hard-coded paths.

The steps followed did amend the Merge Files section so that only the filename was included. Again, the desired result.

If you do get different results, try following all of Karen's steps

OED

Using one the methods above, it is possible to use RoboHelp 9 to produce merged CHMs with no absolute path information.

PROJECTS USED

A zip of the projects used is available from my site. See Item 13 in Using RoboHelp 9.

KAREN'S STEPS

1. Delete the parent project's CPD file.
2. Using Notepad, remove the [MERGE FILES] section from the parent project's HHP file.
3. Using Notepad, remove all <file> entries from the <mergedhelpfiles> section in the parent project's XPJ.
4. Double-click the XPJ file to load the project into RoboHelp 9 or browse to the XPJ file from RoboHelp. The important point is to use the XPJ file to open the project.
5. In the TOC pod, add all CHM's that are part of the merged help system, as follows:
 - a. [Copy all CHMs - except the master \(parent\) project - into the project's folder](#)
 - b. Click the New Merged Project button.
 - c. Browse to location of a child project CHM, select it and click OK.
 - d. Allow RoboHelp to copy the child CHM to the parent project.
 - e. Repeat steps (a) through (c) for each CHM file that will be part of the merge.
6. Save the project, and compile the HTML help.
7. [From the TOC pod, remove the CHM's you just added. \(Do not remove the actual CHM files from the project's folder.\)](#)
8. [Save and compile the HTML help.](#) The [MERGE FILES] section of your project's HHP file should now contain only the names of the merged CHM files, not the hard-coded paths.

I ignored step 5a on the basis that the CHMs would be imported by RoboHelp anyway in step 5d.

I found that Step 7 was not required and as the help was compiled in Step 6, it follows that if Step 7 is not performed, it is not necessary to save and compile again.

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