



Announcing ROPES Version 14

June 25, 2008

We are pleased to announce a new version of ROPES. ROPES Version 14 is now available to order for any new installation or trial. An upgrade kit is planned to allow all existing accounts running ROPES V10 or higher to migrate from your current release to Version 14. The upgrade kit will be available by July 2008. Migration from earlier versions of ROPES is supported, but requires a more complex process, which is outlined in the Conversion Guidelines manual for ROPES Version 14.

There are a number of new features being introduced. Here is a brief description of these features. Full descriptions and instructions for use are included in the new ROPES V14 product manuals, which can be downloaded from the ROPES Technical Support Download page.

All prior fixes have been applied

All fixes that were introduced in ROPES Version 13.0 PTFs or fixes have been applied as part of the Version 14.0 base release.

Support for new TCP/IP Translation Options is introduced.

We have enhanced the data translation options in ROPES for TCP/IP attached printers (LPR and Direct Socket). In addition to the existing translations using the CICS Sockets routines EZACIC04 and EZACIC05, we have added support for EZACIC14, EZACIC15, and EZACICTR, including the EZACIE2A, EZACIA2E and EZACICTR entry points.

The EZACICTR routine is provided as a sample routine in z/OS Communications Server for z/OS V1R9.0, and is available on the web for earlier releases. The EZACICTR routine and its entry points allow an installation to:

- select a translation table dynamically;
- add their own translation tables; or
- pass the translation table to use to the translation routine.

The CICS Socket APPLDATA value is now generated.

We have added the APPLDATA 40 character string to the ROPES Socket connection data. This allows you to have a better understanding of the purpose of the ROPES active sockets connections. The associated application data is made available on Netstat ALL/-A, ALLConn/-a and CConn/-c reports, in SMF 119 TCP Connection Termination records and through the Network Management Interface (NMI) on the GetTCPListeners and GetConnectionDetail poll requests.

The APPLDATA insertion mechanism is an IOCTL call, introduced in CS V1R9 and rolled back to V1R8 and V1R7. We will add this call as a free-standing call which will follow the successful execution of a connect call. The IOCTL call will be traced. Errors from the call that result from the support for this call being unavailable will not result in an error condition with regards to ROPES processing. It will not be logged or reported back to the user other than in the trace activity. The trace activity will show both the data area prior to the call and the results after the call.

The ROPES Stand-By Facility is introduced.

The ROPES Standby Facility provides a place for CICS transactions that store data in ROPES to work seamlessly even if the ROPES Primary Facility data sets are unavailable. This is similar to the ROPES Alternate Facility, but is only available in the CICS environment.

The user transactions that stores data in ROPES do so as always. The ROPES Interface program, ROPEOSRV, which is invoked by EXEC CICS LINK from the application program, will detect that the ROPES Primary Facility is unavailable, either because ROPES was stopped (the System Control Record is so flagged in the ROPERIB data set) or because the ROPERIB data set is unavailable to the application.

The ROPEOSRV module will then determine if there is a Standby Facility available by checking for the presence of the ROPESBR data set and that the data set is open, or can be opened. If the Standby Facility is available, ROPEOSRV will hand the request off to the Standby Interface Program, ROPEOSBY, for processing. It is anticipated that each region that needs this support will have its own set of Standby Facility data sets (ROPESBR and ROPESBQ).

If there is no Standby Facility available, or if the application performs any ROPES function that implies or requires that existing report data be retrieved, the application will receive the ROPES NOT AVAILABLE return code ("5") and no Standby Facility processing will occur. This facility is provided for the sole purpose of allowing user on line applications to create report data when the ROPES Primary Facility is not available.

The data stored in each local region's Standby Facility data sets will be processed by the ROPES Primary Facility region once ROPES is available. The Standby Facility Processor will be started, either by command (SSTA) or by running the ROPESSTA program in the regions startup PLT.

A new batch utility command is provided to allow you to configure the SYSIDENT values of the CICS regions that will participate in Stand-By Facility processing.

Support for non-standard SMTP sockets is added.

The ROPES SMTP printing process now supports the use of an SMTP server that is not listening on the standard port 25. The ROPES Device Block Sockets segment has had a new field added to accommodate the SMTP server port number to be used when connecting to the server. The ROPESDEV TYPE=SOCKETS macro instruction now accepts the value SOKPORT=NNNNN, where NNNNN is a number in range of 1 - 61439. The default value is still 25, the standard SMTP port number, which will be used if the SOKPORT keyword is not specified, or if the Device Block was created prior to V13. The anticipated use of this is to provide the ability to have different ROPES SMTP printer tasks communicate with different SMTP servers if you have the need to distribute your workload, and to allow you to assign a non-standard port when you have no other way, such as a firewall, to prevent the use of the server for unintended purposes, for example, as an Open Relay mail server for use by spammers and other unsavory types.

The Utility Driver now allows comments in its input.

The batch utility driver program, ROPEUTIL, now permits comments in its input stream.