Newsletter #14 (Oct 20, 2005)

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What's New

Version 3.6 Released

If you're a licensed Campground Master customer, you should have received an update notification already. (If not, let us know so we can update your information.)

For our newsletter readers who are not customers yet, you can get the update release too. Just follow these steps:

1. If you have any data already in Campground Master that you want to keep, be sure to make a backup (Maintenance / Backup database), and also save it to a database name other than "demo". The "demo" database will be replaced with a fresh sample database during an upgrade installation.

2. Go to our web site, and click on the "FREE demo" link in the left hand menu. Follow the instructions there to download and install the new version. There is no need to uninstall the previous version first.

3. If you're using Campground Master on more than one computer, repeat step #2 on each computer.

To see what's new in this version, go to the web page below:
http://www.campground-master.com/rel36/index.html

Top 5 Networking Errors

This isn't really new, but we feel compelled to put it in the first section of the newsletter because it's so important.

Despite our best efforts in the documentation to warn about incorrect setup of the networking functionality, many people still set it up wrong. This is usually because a consultant comes in and assumes he knows what to do based on how other software works, and doesn't look at the documentation.

PLEASE, if you plan to set up Campground Master for networking, make sure the person doing it reads the documentation carefully. Setting up the networking incorrectly (specifically, trying to share the database file) can cause **massive data loss**.

In case you're already networked and you're wondering whether it's set up right, here are the top 5 signs you've set up the networking incorrectly:

5. You don't see a "Connecting to server" progress window when you start Campground Master on a client workstation.
4. You often get the message "Cannot open the database for saving".
3. Changes from one computer don't show up on another one unless you restart it. (Or changes disappear after restarting the program.)
2. You often get the message "Changes are present in the log that are not in the database" when starting Campground Master.
1. You didn't read the Networking Setup section of the documentation.

Any of these are signs that you may be trying to share the database file between computers instead of setting up the network the appropriate way (with each computer saving its data on its own hard drive). If this is the case, it must be corrected immediately to prevent further problems.

Q & A

Reporting daily receipts

Q: How do I get a report of my daily receipts so I can balance the cash drawer?

A: This is one of the easiest reports to create, and yet it's also one of the most common reporting questions for beginners (probably because its not in an obvious place).

1. Go to the "Transactions" tab view (the one on the far right, after Payments Due -- not on the top menu).
2. Click the "Summary Options" button at the top (if you have a small screen you may need to check the "Summarize" box first).
3. Click the button under Quick-Reports that says "Receipts by Payment Method".

If necessary, you can change the dates at the top to see previous days.

"Virtual Memory Too Low" message

Q: Why does Windows XP report "Virtual Memory Too Low" when I start Campground Master?

A.: Campground Master loads the complete database into RAM memory, so this requires a lot of memory very quickly. This can cause Windows to temporarily "push out" some other applications you might have currently loaded into "virtual" memory (a file on your hard disk). We believe that the sudden increase in the memory requirements makes Windows believe that it will need more space on the hard disk, so it wants to make the virtual memory file bigger.

This is not really a problem and shouldn't affect the operation, though it may be an indication that you need more RAM to handle things efficiently. You may also be able to eliminate this message by specifying a larger fixed size for the paging file through the System settings -- however this is a job for your system administrator and could cause problems if done incorrectly, so we don't want to give details here.

Split reservation receipts, wrong site

Q: When I split a reservation in order to move the person to a different site, and then print a new receipt after moving them, the receipt still shows the old site instead of the new one. How can I fix that?

A: Versions prior to 3.5 always used the "older" part of the reservation for the transaction master, so the receipt would show the old site. If you upgrade to version 3.5 (or the new 3.6), then there will be several options shown when splitting reservations. The recommended option will be to make the "new" part the master and the older part a sub-member, which will correct this problem.

Export to Web, fixing the Park name

Q: How do I get our campground's name to show up on the vacancy grid on our web site, instead of the name "My Park"?

A: You need to edit the template file used in the Export to Web function. This template file is probably "All.htt" (unless you're using separate templates for different site types, etc.), and will probably be in the folder C:\Program Files\Campground Master\. Open that file with a text editor like Notepad, edit the "My Park" text as needed (being careful not to change other parts of the file unless you understand HTML coding), and save the changes.

If you understand HTML coding then you can make other changes if needed -- the template is just an HTML file with special insertion codes for the grid. Some of our customers change it to look just like other pages on their web site, so it blends in.

Correcting a previous meter reading

Q: How do I correct a previous electric meter reading, so the charges are correct when I enter the new one?

A: The previous meter readings are stored with the Site Details for each site -- so just right-click on the appropriate site name (e.g. on the Rack) and select Site Details. Enter the correct previous meter reading in the appropriate "Reading" field there.

Error when restoring from floppies

Q: Whenever I try to use the Restore from Backup function to restore from my floppy disk backup, I get an error like "Error restoring database backup". What's happening to the backups?

A: This error can be caused by inserting the #1 disk of a multi-disk backup first, instead of the last one. If it takes more than one floppy disk to do a backup, you need to start the restore using the **last** disk of the set rather than the first one. After the restore starts, it will ask you for the other disk(s) when it needs them.

Of course you can also get this error if there's a problem with the disk itself, or the drive. We recommend that you do a "test" restore from your backup immediately after you make the backup, and do this at least once per week. If it fails, then it won't hurt anything because it won't load a damaged backup. If it succeeds, then you've increased your peace of mind.

Tips & Techniques

Moving sites without splitting

If you split a long-term reservation to move the customer to a different site in the middle of their stay, it may not auto-calculate each part the way you want. So you may want to move the whole reservation instead of splitting it. However, it won't let you do this if there used to be someone in the other site during any part of the reservation's date range (it reports a conflict), even if they've already checked out.

While we don't generally recommend this procedure, there is a way to handle a special case like this. One of our customers actually discovered this trick before we thought of it.

Note that this assumes you have version 3.5 or later, and it also assumes that you always use the Check Out function on past reservations rather than just leaving them with a "Checked In" status.

1. Go to Maintenance / Program Options / Reservations, and check the option "Make checked-out sites immediately available....".
2. Now you can move the entire reservation to the new site without a conflict (any past checked-out reservations will be ignored), assuming of course that there aren't any conflicts in the future either.
3. You can disable the option in step 1 again if you prefer to see the checked-out reservations on the Rack.

Note also that if you do change the option back to disabled in step 3 and then try to make any changes to the reservation details or dates later, that will trigger a conflict-check and could prevent the changes.

Rates for monthly add-on charges

The Rates Setup Examples in the documentation (version 3.5 or later) have a simple example of an add-on like 50A, which is a standard site/reservation attribute field and usually applies to short-term stays.

However, you may have a need to set up an auto-rate that will be used in special cases -- for instance a monthly Cable TV charge that's optional. You can set up an "Add-on" rate for this, and use the "Applies if reservation field" option in the rate definition to add this charge automatically (assuming you're already using auto-rates or monthly billing for the basic charges).

Here are the steps needed:

1. Go to Maintenance / Data Field Definitions / Reservation Fields and locate the "Cable" field (the Field ID is Attrib_Cable), and change the Status to "Enabled". (If your need is for an option not present as an attribute field already, you can modify the name of one that's not being used.)

2. Go to Maintenance / Program Options / Reservations and select the "Cable" field for one of the available Quick-select Preferences. This will add a Cable checkbox on the New Reservation dialog.

Note: For any existing reservations that should be charged for this, you need to go into Reservation Details for the reservations, then click "Site Preferences", and check the box for Cable.

3. Go into Rates Setup and create a rate of type "Add-On" for the cable TV charge. Enter the charge for cable and other "Applies if..." conditions needed, as you would any other rate definition, and then select "Cable" from the list after "Applies if reservation field". It will show "True" after the field name when you select it, so leave that selected.

Now whenever you use Monthly Billing or Auto-calculate the rates, it will also add the cable charge for those reservations with that preference selected.

Finding cancelled reservations

When you cancel a reservation (using the "Cancel" right-click function or by changing the status to "Cancelled" in Reservation Details), the reservation is still in the system but is simply flagged as being cancelled.

If you need to see which reservations have been cancelled, or if you need to locate a particular one, there are a couple ways to proceed:

1. Click on the "Non-Reserved" tab view, and select "Cancelled" from the drop-down list at the top (it defaults to "Waiting List"). Then select a date range, which corresponds to the dates during which the cancelled reservation would have occurred (not the date it was cancelled).

-- or --

2. Go to Reservations / Find Reservation, then click on Reservation Filtering. Select the "Cancelled" item in the Reservation Status list at the bottom and then click OK. Now uncheck both of the "Filter by..." boxes so it will show all reservations with Cancelled status. Note -- you should re-check the "Filter by" box before closing the Find Reservation dialog, otherwise it will list all reservations the next time it's used (which could take awhile).

Each method has its advantages and disadvantages, depending on which fields you want to see or what kind of additional filtering you want to use.

Miscellaneous

Internet Explorer Auto-complete Security

One of our customers noticed when using our web site's order form that their credit card number showed up automatically when they started to type it. This is Microsoft's "Auto-complete" feature for web forms in Internet Explorer, which is often helpful but does present a security issue if other people use your computer.

There is a way to disable the auto-complete function in Explorer, but that won't delete any previous information already saved, and you can't keep someone else from re-enabling the auto-complete function to see it.

What we use to delete auto-complete information that we want private is a little program called "Protected Storage Passview", which allows you to view and delete any of the auto-complete information.

You can get it here:
http://www.nirsoft.net/utils/pspv.html

However, this program can also be dangerous to leave on your computer because it allows anyone to see all passwords and auto-complete information. Use it to delete sensitive information as often as possible, and don't make it easy for someone else to use the program (keep it on a removable disk, or uninstall it after each use).