Newsletter #3

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What's New

Web form example with parsing rules

We've put together an example of a web form that you could use on your web site, along with the Parsing Rules needed to extract the data form the E-mail you would get when someone fills in the form. This assumes that your web provider has some kind of form script that you can use to handle the HTML "<form>" processing. Of course this is still intended for your web site designer since it will probably require a some modifications for your specific application, but perhaps it will minimize the time needed to set it up.

If you're using the Export to Web function, this example form also includes a fancier (and more foolproof) way to handle the Arrival Date along with the updated Javascript to extract the date parameters accordingly from the vacancy grid links. Instead of a single text entry for the arrival date, it uses month, day, and year drop-down lists with the months spelled out. This should help reduce entry errors and confusion. (Thanks to one of our customers for this idea and sample code.)

The sample form, along with a CSV file with sample parsing rules that would parse that particular form, can be downloaded from our web site. The parsing rules CSV file can be imported to a parsing set through the Edit Parsing Set dialog.

If you're viewing this in PDF (printed) form, you can download these from our web site -- see the "Downloads" link in the menu, and go down to the bottom to locate the "Sample Online Reservation Form" links. Or you can type in the URLs shown below.

You can view or download the sample form here:
http://www.campground-master.com/zip/sample-res-form.html

You can also get a CSV file with the parsing rules here: (right-click and select "Save Target As" to save it to your computer without opening it up)
http://www.campground-master.com/zip/sample-res-form-parsing-rules.csv

Keep in mind that this is only an example -- since it uses some default values for selections like How-Heard, Rig Type, Site Type, etc, it probably would not be appropriate for any particular park without modification. Your web site designer can use this to start with or get some ideas from, but it needs to be tailored to your particular application before actual use.

Correction - Java script example

The Javascript code in the previous newsletter had a problem with the date format -- it assumed the date in the parameter could be parsed directly by Campground Master, but the date format used in the links from the vacancy grid (e.g. May 23, 2005) could not be understood in the last beta version.

This has now bee fixed on both ends -- The new beta v3.1.11 can interpret that date format directly, and also the Javascript has been updated to convert the date into the mm/dd/yy format that Campground Master can deal with more easily (and this might look better on your web form anyway).

The corrected Javascript code using a single entry field for the arrival date can be found on the web site (the code in the previous newsletter has been updated). Or if you use the Javascript in the new web form example just mentioned in this newsletter then that's already been taken care of.

New Zip and Postal Code data

The next release will have updated data for U.S. Zip codes an Canadian Postal Codes. The latest beta, 3.1.11, already has this data.

We were amazed to find that 1071 new U.S. Zip codes and 9763 new Canadian postal codes were added in the past year.

Are you still typing cities and states? We hope not! Remember that you should just enter the Zip/Postal code in the City field (there's no need to move all the way to the Zip field) -- the City, State, Zip, and even the Country will be filled in as soon as you press Tab or Enter. It may take a little getting used to, but it will sure speed up data entry and reduce mistakes.

Note: The new zip/postal code data will only work with the newer version of the software -- and it's installed automatically when you upgrade, so you don't have to do any extra steps.

Feedback

Q & A

Here are some interesting support questions we've encountered this week. Have a question? Let us know!

Q: How do I get a monthly report of my POS sales for my accountant?

Go to the Transactions tab view (on the far right), click Summary Options, select "Monthly" for summarize period, then click the "Filters" button, select "Last Month" from the Dates drop-down, click OK, then click the "Inventory Sales, by Amount" button in Quick Reports.

Of course you can do any date range, this is just an example for last month's sales.

If you want a report of overall sales, not just POS sales, then use the Quick Report "Receipts by Category" or "Charges by Category" (depending on when you want sales recorded -- when they pay or when the charges are applied).

Q: How can I just print part of the Rack so it's not so tiny (or take so many pages)?

When printing the Rack, be sure to select the "Show Range" checkbox at the top so it only prints it for the dates you select. Otherwise it will print either very small (if you have the "Fit to Page" printing option selected) or it will print out dozens of pages to include several months' worth.

Q: Is there a way to generate a report that includes the rate code and rate description?

No, those are just for your reference when selecting rates and aren't stored with the transactions.

If you need more detailed reporting than you're getting now, then set up Transaction Categories according to the reporting classifications you need (see Maintenance / Pick Lists), then select the appropriate category in the Charge transaction for each of your Rates. You could have a separate category for each rate if you really wanted to, and it would report those transactions accordingly. Note however that this will not affect any transactions already added to reservations -- only those added from now on.

IMPORTANT -- Don't delete existing Transaction Categories or else any previous transactions using those categories will be corrupted and will not longer report properly!

Q: If I change my rates through Rates Setup, is that going to affect all of my old reservations that used those rates?

Once a rate is "used" or "added" to a reservation, it just adds the transactions as indicated in the rate without any relation back to the rate definition. So changing rates will not affect any previous transactions, nor will historical reports be affected. You could even delete old rates and add new ones.

However, if you change rates that could still be applied to current reservations (e.g. long-term stays), then if you go back and "auto-calculate" again, it would apply the new rates (and appropriate credits for the old transactions). So if you're changing rates for a new year, it's best to make a copy the rates and include the appropriate dates in "Season Dates Applicable" for each rate. That way it will always know the proper rate to apply for any given time period, whether it's an old reservation or a new one.

Q: I am the campground supervisor and reside on site at no cost to me. I did not enter an amount but the program shows 19 days overdue and unpaid days, how do I fix that?

Go to Reservation Details and check the box by the "Paid-thru" date, making sure the date is the same as the "Last Night" so it considers it paid in full. This is what determines the unpaid days (and the color coding on the Rack).

Q: If someone stays for six days and the seven day is free, how do I show a free day?

This would generally be the same thing as a weekly rate -- set up a rate that's "per 7 days", and make the charge be the total amount for 6 days. If you're using auto-rates, make sure this rate is *above* the daily rate in the list, so if they stay 7 days it will use this 7-day rate instead of 7 daily rates.

Here's a link to a specific example in the manual on our web site (in the rates samples):
http://campgroundmaster.com/help31/ratesetupexamples.htm

Reader Comments

One of our customers writes with this request:

Q: I would like to be able to red flag a reservation when it is made or sometime thereafter, and then be able to somehow show a red flag warning without going and looking at the customer information. An example: we require people be at least 18 years or older to make a reservation. Occasionally we take a reservation and we are suspicious that they are not 18. When we check them in I would like to see that the reservation has been red flagged so we remember to check their age.

A: Version 4.0 will be able to do this (later this year), since it will be open to all kinds of customizations. You will be able to add a flag field and show the reservation in a different color on the Rack based on that field. We also plan to add customizable pop-up notices in the future, which might also be done by version 4.0.

Bug Hunt -- Repeating auto-rates

We think that this problem was limited to beta versions 3.1.8 through 3.1.10, but we want to make sure.

Assuming you're using auto-rates, do you see it subtract and re-add all of the rates with identical descriptions? It would show duplicates of all previous auto-rates with negative quantities, then another set of duplicates adding them back in. This doesn't affect the total but can be a real mess on receipts.

This may happen automatically if you have it auto-recalculating charges, but you can also check for it by going into any reservation's transactions and clicking "Auto-Calculate" multiple times. After they're added once, it should not add them again.

So far we've seen two definite cases of this, but it only seems to happen on certain computers (the Windows version doesn't seem to matter). We can't reproduce it here, and in one place it only happens on one of their networked computers. It might be related to Celeron processors, but that's not confirmed.

In any case, please let us know whether or not you see this, along with which Campground Master version you're using and what type of computer/processor you have.

Tips & Techniques

Getting clickable links in confirmation letters

If you're trying to put your web site's address in confirmation letters, you may have noticed that it's not clickable in E-mails. Actually this is only an issue for AOL users -- every other E-mail program in the world automatically highlights web addresses in the text. Why AOL has never fixed this is beyond me.

However there is a workaround. You can put the HTML code for creating a clickable URL in the text and then AOL will interpret it. Like this:

 http://CampgroundMaster.com

Of course if you put the HTML code in with your web site address in Park Setup, it will show that way on printed receipts. Instead, put this in the "Signature" area in your SMTP setup and in the E-mail confirmation letter text or bottom text.

Actually if you're using AOL to read this newsletter, you probably can't see what the original text looks like above since it's automatically interpreted. if you can view the "raw text" of the message then you should be able to see it. Otherwise, go to our web site (link below) to see what text is actually used to create the clickable URL for "AOL users click here)".

http://campground-master.com/news/index.html?gettingclickablelinksincon.html

Keeping a customer deposit or overpayment for future stays

Sometimes a customer may cancel a reservation (for a good reason) and want his deposit kept for a later stay, or they might have a credit balance due to an overpayment or bad-weather credit that you want to hold for later.

You should always "zero-out" reservations that are cancelled or checked out, and you don't really want to just leave the balance on the reservation where you might forget about it anyway. So the way to handle this is to transfer the reservation deposit or extra payment to the Customer's balance (outside of the reservation). The balance will stay with the customer's record, and when that customer checks in again it will pop up a reminder that they have a credit balance that could be applied to the new reservation.

To transfer a deposit, follow the steps below. For transferring an overpayment that's not a "Deposit" transaction type, use the same steps but use "Transfer Payment" instead of "Transfer Deposit".

1. Bring up the Reservation Transactions for the reservation in question (e.g. New/Edit Transactions).
2. If necessary, clear out or credit back any charges that the customer doesn't owe, so you have the proper credit (negative) balance due.
3. Click "Transfer Dep." (or "Transfer Pmt")
4. It will show the "From" portion at the top with the current reservation information. Leave this as it is.
5. Click "Find Customer" and locate the correct customer record, select it and click "Use" (it will automatically search with the last name to help you out, if you have a recent version of the program).
6. The customer name will be filled in, and also the presumed amount to transfer will be shown. (If the amount is not correct, there may be some charge or Dep Applied transactions still present that are keeping it from being available, or else you need to select the other kind of transfer in step 3.)
7. Change the amount and/or description if desired, then click "Save".
8. A warning will indicate that it's going to the customer, which in this case is OK, so click "Yes".

That's it -- if you transferred the entire amount, the balance should now be $0 for the reservation. If you go back to the customer's record, though, you'll see that the customer still has the credit balance.

Now when you make a new reservation for them (or when they check in), repeat the steps above -- except that in step 4 you need to change the "From" selection to "To", since you're transferring the amount to the reservation, from the customer.

Miscellaneous

Contacting Us

To respond to this newsletter, just send us an E-mail. If you're reading this in your E-mail program, just reply to this E-mail.

Otherwise, see our web site for complete contact information and an E-mail link:
http://www.Campground-Master.com/contact.html

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