

CICS Explorer Version 1.0.0.2 – the latest version of CICS Explorer, the smart new face of CICS

HOST: Hi, and welcome to the “Did you say Mainframe?” podcast series. This is where we regularly interview IBM technical experts who can help you to understand important IBM mainframe hardware and software issues. I'm your host Sherrie Abshire.

Today we're going to talk about CICS Explorer and the new capabilities that have recently been refreshed.

Our guest today is Matthew Webster from the CICS Worldwide Development team in Hursley, UK. Matthew, it's great to have you here.

SME: Thanks for inviting me to talk about the exciting things the team has been up to.

HOST: Before we begin, I'd like to mention to our listeners that at the end of this podcast I will be providing a URL where you can download this new version of CICS Explorer.

HOST Question 1: So Matthew, I believe you have some exciting news about CICS Explorer, the smart new face of CICS.

SME Answer 1: Yes. As our audience will know not only are we celebrating the 40th birthday of CICS this year but also the Generally Availability of CICS V4.1 of which Explorer was a significant part. However, for me September is the real GA for CICS Explorer.

HOST Question 2: Why is that?

SME Answer 2: In June our V4 customers were able to start using Explorer and the new CICS Management Client Interface, or CMCI, to manage standalone or “single server” CICS regions without the need for CICSplex System Manager, something that had previously been a pre-requisite for both CICS V3 and V4. This gave users the same capability as the traditional 3270 CEMT transaction but with a modern interface. In fact they could start using exactly the same views, editors and menus as they would if using CICSplex SM to manage their system. However, if a user tried to look at a CICS definition, for example a transaction definition, in the CICS System Definition or CSD file belonging to that single-server region they got a warning message. Now if a customer installs the PTF to “Enable CSD Access via CPSM API”, and downloads version 1.0.0.2 of Explorer their users will be able to manage those CICS definitions. That is they can create, update, install and delete CSD definitions using existing wizards, editors and views. They will also have access to CSD groups and CSD lists. In fact they will have the full capability of the traditional 3270 CEDA application from within Explorer.

HOST Question 3: What about customers who are already using CICS Explorer with CICSplex System Manager, how will the new version benefit them?

SME Answer 3: While CICSplex System Manager Business Application Services or BAS remains the strategic solution for managing CICS definitions in a CICSplex we recognize that customers still use CSDs either exclusively or in combination with BAS. Until now this meant users had to switch between the CICSplex SM Web User Interface and CEDA to manage their definitions. Not ideal, especially as more and more CICS capability such as Event Processing is accessed exclusively through Explorer. Version 1.0.0.2 allows a user to access any CSD in their CICSplex simply by selecting the region that it belongs to. This is all done through a single CMCI connection so a user no longer has to log on to one region to make some changes before logging off and logging on to the another to make some more. We believe this will not only improve productivity for experienced users but also reduce the

chance of making a mistake for those new to CICS. This is because Explorer users can also take advantage of a single Error Log view, context sensitive help and integration with the CICS Information Centre.

HOST Question 4: How do you think customers will feel about this new CSD management support?

SME Answer 4: Just over a year ago we announced CICS Explorer as the smart new face of CICS and made it available for download as a Supportpac. The customers who saw it were very excited but one of the first comments we had was “This is great but we still use CSDs. I don’t want to have two different interfaces to manage my definitions”. So I think V4 customers will be pleased that they now only have one interface.

HOST Question 5: What affect does this new capability have on the CICS Configuration Manager plug-in for Explorer which I believe already supports access to CSDs as well as CICSplex System Manager Business Application Support?

SME Answer 5: The most important value proposition for Explorer is a consistent user experience for CICS and CICS Tools as well as products like Rational Developer for System z. From the very beginning with the Configuration Manager plug-in wherever possible we made sure to use exactly the same views, editors and wizards as the CICS System Manager or SM perspective that comes with the base Explorer while adding new ones for unique features such as change history. By making CSD management a core capability we have taken this consistent interface a step further. In this respect we have made it even easier for customers to adopt CM because regardless of whether they using CICSplex SM or not, BAS or CSD their users’ interaction with CICS will be exactly the same. This is all part of our “Integrate, Extend and Enhance” strategy for Explorer and the CICS Tools. In short there is just one consistent way install, configure and maintain each new plug-in which will integrate with core capability, seamlessly extend the existing user interface and enhance the overall user experience by increasing productivity.

HOST Question 6: Can you tell us more about the Configuration Manager integration?

SME Answer 6: The latest version of the CM plug-in is now available. It supports both CICS TS V4.1 and CICS Configuration Manager V2.1. However, I will let my colleagues cover its new capability in more detail in a future podcast.

HOST Question 7: Are there any additional CICS Explorer enhancements that you would like to mention?

SME Answer 7: As our listeners know we intend to release a version of Explorer every quarter. Each new version will contain minor improvements as well as big ticket items like CSD support and the usual bug fixes. Explorer version 1.0.0.2 adds support for BAS Resource Descriptions which are used like CSD lists to manage multiple Resource Groups. We have also added support for hot-keys like Delete to allow more access to Explorer without the need to use a mouse. Finally in conjunction with a CICS TS PTF we have enabled the Default Warning Count capability for CMCI connections.

HOST Question 8: Where can customers find out more about this exciting new version of CICS Explorer?

SME Answer 8: Well to start with they can go straight to the Web site at ibm.com/cics/explorer and download the new version right now. The “What’s New” section tells users about all the new features they can expect and the integrated help has screen

shots of what they look like in Explorer. We've also produced a new video which shows the CSD support in action. Customers can just follow the link to YouTube.

HOST: Thank you Matthew, that was really interesting.

SME: Thanks again for the opportunity to talk about Explorer, and I look forward to our next conversation.

HOST: Well, that wraps up this podcast discussion. To find out more about the new version of the CICS Explorer, as well as several demos to help you understand and implement some of the new features, please go to the description for this podcast at:
<http://www.ibm.com/software/os/systemz/podcasts/websphereonz/>

Join us next time as we talk about another important mainframe topic. For now, this is Sherrie Abshire saying "Thanks for listening".