

The 3000 News Wire

Independent Information to Maximize Your HP e3000

Much more than just a GUI viewer to MPE/iX

Latest GUI3000 is a Toolbox of Toolboxes for your e3000

Review by John Burke

Developed by Pete Vickers of GUI Innovations, Ltd. and distributed by OmniSolutions, Inc, GUI3000 puts a graphical front end on your HP e3000s, letting you manage multiple systems from a single Windows Explorer-like application on your PC. GUI3000 manages files, groups and accounts, provides information about your IMAGE databases and can execute MPE commands on your behalf. Using a mouse, you can create and modify groups and accounts and even create new accounting structures. You can view files and spoolfiles in any order you wish, ascending or descending on any attribute. You can easily purge, copy or rename whole groups of files, even across systems, manipulate spool files, view console logs and monitor system events.

Four years ago I looked at version 1 of GUI3000. It was nice, but I really did not see much use for it beyond the Help Desk and maybe for new operators. Four years have brought a lot of changes. In Version 4, GUI3000 has grown up. Don't be fooled by the "The Window on your HP 3000" tag which is still being used. Truly, GUI3000 is so feature-rich that no single phrase can adequately describe it. GUI3000 is not just a toolbox, but a collection of toolboxes, each with specialized tools for different tasks, but all with a common interface.

Features

Figure 1 shows a GUI3000 client instance with nine toolbox windows open, just to give you an idea of some of the things you can do. On the left of the screen is the server window that shows, in this case, connections to three servers. Along the bottom of the screen is the System Monitor. Then, left to right,

top to bottom, we have the Disc Space Explorer, Job/Session Explorer and Show All Users window. Continuing, we have DB Explorer, Console Logs Explorer, Devices Explorer and Spoolfile Explorer. Let's look at a few of these.

The System Monitor (Figure 1) is new with Version 4. It should not be confused with performance monitoring software, but it will alert you to important events. You can configure the system to warn you when replies are outstanding, when waiting jobs exceed your set threshold, when

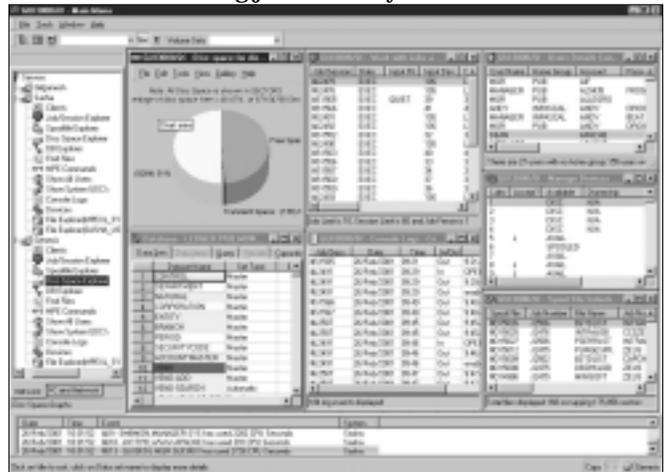


Figure 1: GUI3000 has a wealth of tools to manage a 3000

the session limit is being approached, and when a job or session has used more than a configured amount of CPU time. The system monitor can also tell you when disk space falls below a user-defined threshold or when files or datasets are approaching their limits. The system monitor is a slave process under the main daemon that is started when the server job starts. By default, the monitor process checks the system every 60 seconds. This is adjustable via a CI variable in the jobstream and, depending upon the size of your system, you might want to shorten or lengthen this interval.

The Console Logs Explorer (Figure 1) allows you to display logs from all your connected systems. You can filter dates, times and whether to show everything or just logon/logoff events. This is not a "real-time" console viewer, so you have to do a switchlog first if you want to see

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Test Drive Road Report

GUI3000
Version 4.0.44

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The GUI3000 server portion runs on all supported releases of MPE/iX. The GUI3000 client runs on all Win 9x and Win NT/2000 systems. Pricing for GUI3000 is tier-based (HP e3000 CPU model) and ranges from US\$1,500 to US\$3,000. The base price includes eight client licenses. Additional client licenses are available in bundles of four for US\$300. Annual phone-in technical support is priced at 15 percent of the total license fee, paid annually in advance. A fully functioning, limited to three concurrent connections, 30-day demo is available on request.

what happened in the last few minutes. However, it can be very useful if you are trying to track down what might have happened 30 minutes ago.

The Database Explorer (Figures 1 and 3) is a very important and powerful feature of GUI3000. When you double-click on this, it first asks for the database name and a password and then displays the initial screen for that database showing all the datasets you can access. The Data Items tab screen allows you to get details on the datasets and data items. Double clicking an item shows you where else it appears in the database. All the links are clearly displayed and dataset capacities (including DDX capacity), along with number of entries are graphically rendered. The Capacities tab screen allows you to change capacities of datasets right from GUI3000 if you have Adager. The Retrieve tab screen allows simple retrieval of individual dataset entries. You can use select criteria and include/exclude fields.

The File Explorer (Figure 2) is more than

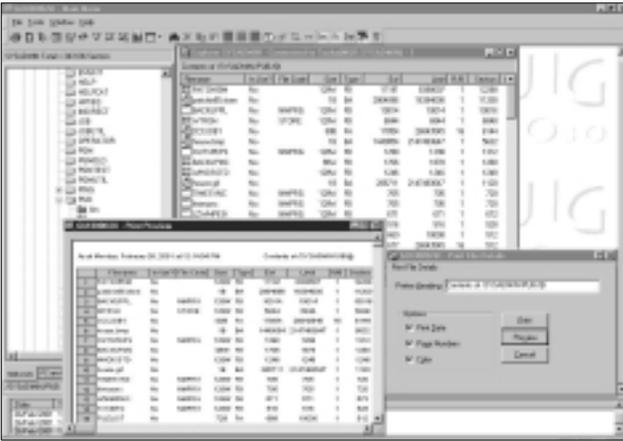


Figure 2: GUI300's File Explorer delivers a nice listing

just a version of Samba that understands MPE file types. Note how easy it is to sort on, for example, sectors. Just click on the column heading. Click again to reverse the order of the sort. You can filter files based upon size, dates, file code, file type and creator. One thing that has always annoyed an old curmudgeon like me about Windows is that it is very nearly impossible to get a nice printed listing of files. Figure 2 shows how easy it is to do this in GUI3000. But there is more.

Right click on any file and you can send it to a viewer, to an editor (which can be Qedit for Windows or Whisper Programmer Studio or a simple internal editor), to a printer and even e-mail as either text or attachment. You can also stream it, if it is a job file, or schedule it for later execution. You can add the file to the System Monitor and even store whole groups of files to tape, all from the File Explorer.

The Spoolfile Explorer really blew me away (Figure 1). In addition to normal spoolfile management and all the different

sort capabilities that exist in File Explorer, you can do a quick view of the beginning or end of the spoolfile or even view the entire file at your PC. You can filter the display by, for example, user or date or printer or half a dozen other criteria. You can print it locally or remotely, e-mail it as text or as an attachment and — get this — you can export it as either a PDF or HTML file! There are probably people willing to purchase GUI3000 just for this capability alone.

Installation

You install GUI3000 on one or more PCs first, then install from one of the PCs to each server in your landscape. The PC install is a typical Windows application install, including the seemingly obligatory exit all Windows programs first and reboot after the install for the changes to take effect. The easiest way to install the server software is to use the GUI Server Installation Program (guisip.exe) from the PC. This requires that FTP be available on the host. If FTP is not running on the server machine, the GUI3000 package contains scripts that can be used with either the Reflection or Minisoft terminal emulators to install the host software. If FTP is not running, then you can not take advantage of some of the features of GUI3000, so you may as well ensure you have FTP available on all host systems you plan to use.

Documentation

The trial version of GUI3000 comes with a manual in PDF format. Licensees of GUI3000 also get a printed copy of the manual. I had a preliminary version, so it is a little hard to judge the overall quality, though it appears to have numerous screen shots, a big plus in my mind. The online HELP is, however, excellent and also includes many screen shots (see Figure 3). Supplying the manual in PDF format is a nice touch. This is particularly helpful when using the manual for reference — the Adobe Acrobat Reader's Find function can be used to search for the information you need.

How does it work?

GUI3000 works using sockets in a client-server architecture. A server program runs on each HP e3000 host, supporting multiple concurrent connections. You log on to each host and the GUI3000 server uses your logon capabilities to determine what you can do. However, no sessions are creat-

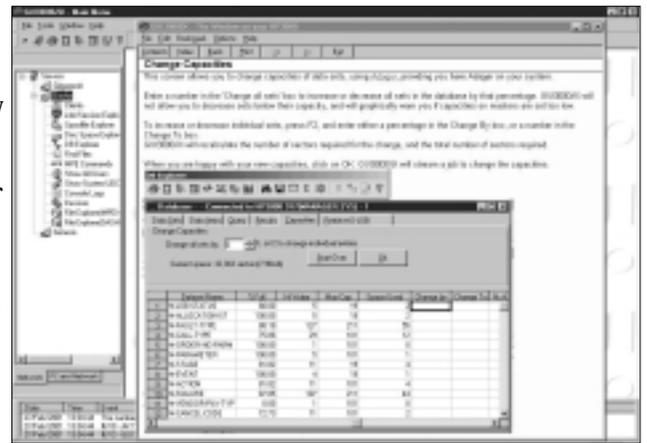


Figure 3: Online help simplified using Database Explorer

ed. The GUI3000 server spawns a process that "runs" under your user and account without creating a session. The GUI3000 system includes a host utility program GUIUTIL and command file GUIX to control and provide information about the server daemon. With GUIUTIL you can start and stop the server daemon, show the users attached, give a count of the processes attached to the daemon, kill an existing client connection, and show the user command history. I've always appreciated this approach to controlling server daemons as opposed to the batch job you stream to start and then have to abort to stop.

GUI3000 is highly customizable. You can configure it to suit the needs of the System Manager or the end user. You can lock out any parts of GUI3000 from the end user. For example, you might want to set up a Help Desk user to only be able to access the Jobs/Sessions Explorer and Spoolfile Explorer and further restrict access by putting a filter on the Spoolfile Explorer to allow access to only certain types of files.

Note that GUI3000 has built-in interfaces or hooks to various third-party products such as Adager, Qedit for Windows, Whisper Programmer's Studio, MPEX, Security/3000 and WRQ's and Minisoft's terminal emulators. You do not have to do anything extra except in the case of editor or terminal emulator, where as part of the configuration process you tell GUI3000 which you want to use.

Conclusion

We system managers are always looking for additional tools to help us manage our systems. GUI3000 is the most feature-rich toolbox I've seen for day-to-day system management tasks — plus it provides functionality you just cannot get anywhere else. I've really only touched the surface of what GUI3000 can do, but hopefully you've seen enough to pique your interest. Check out www.GUI3000.com. Coming soon: GUI3000 for Windows ME and handheld devices!