
ClearQuest External Attachments Package

IBM Rational change and release management



This presentation covers the External Attachments package for IBM Rational® ClearQuest®.

Introducing External Attachments for ClearQuest

- External Attachments for ClearQuest are available starting in the Attachments 2.0 package.
- This package allows for the storage of ClearQuest attachments on an FTP server.
- This is an upgrade to the original Attachments package for ClearQuest.



The original Attachments package for ClearQuest allowed you to store attachments for records. However, that storage was limited to the ClearQuest database itself. Starting in version 2.0 of the Attachments package, you have the capability to store attachments for your ClearQuest records on an FTP server. This package is an update to the original ClearQuest Attachments package.

Before implementation, see the Attachments Package documentation of your specific ClearQuest version for information on limitations of this package with your ClearQuest schema.

Advantages

- It reduces the size of the ClearQuest database, which helps with performance and administration functions.
- Reducing bandwidth strain on the database server by distributing attachment activity.
- You can perform actions with the files in the external storage site:
 - Replace an existing **Attachment** with a changed file of the same name.
 - Add **Attachments** to the external storage site.

There are several advantages to using this method of attaching files with ClearQuest. It reduces the size of the ClearQuest database, which can help with performance, backup and restore activities, and other administration functions. It improves performance by reducing bandwidth strain on the database server because of the distribution of attachment activity to the external server.

Additionally, you can perform actions with the files stored on the external storage site, instead of encountering limitations with the files being stored in a database.

User experience for attachments remains simple

- Uses the existing **Add** button seen in ClearQuest records under the **Attachments Tab**.
- Attachments you add during record editing temporarily display in the **Attachments** box.



- When the record is saved, the attachment is transferred to the external storage site. The attachment is then removed from the **Attachments** box.
- A URL link to the attachment location for that record is stored in a field under the attachments field on the **Attachments Tab**.

The implementation of this package does not cause major changes in user experience. Like before, you can add attachments when editing records using the Add button under the Attachments Tab.

When adding the attachment, the file is visible in the Attachments box. When you have saved your changes to the record, the file is removed from the Attachments box and transferred to the external storage server. A URL link to the file location for that record is added to a field under the Attachments field on the Attachments Tab.

No interruption of work if storage server is unavailable

- If the storage server is unavailable when an attachment needs to be transferred to external storage, the attachment is temporarily stored in the ClearQuest database. It will remain visible in the **Attachments** box during this time.
- The next time changes to the record are saved, ClearQuest makes another attempt to transfer the file to the FTP Server:
 - If the server is available, the attachment is transferred to the server.
 - If that transfer is successful, the version of the attachment stored in the ClearQuest database is removed. The **Attachments Tab** will show the URL to the storage location.



The new Attachments package is designed to continue working even in the event of an external storage server outage. In the event that the storage server is unavailable, attachments are temporarily stored in the ClearQuest database.

The next time the record is updated, the package checks for the availability of the storage server. If it is back online, the attachment is transferred to the storage server. If that process is successful, the attachment that is stored in the ClearQuest database is removed. The attachment is available to ClearQuest users in either of these situations.

Controlling attachment storage (1 of 2)

- The FTP site and connection information is specified by the settings in the ClearQuest **AXPAttachmentControl** record.

The screenshot shows a web-based form titled "Create (AXPAttachmentControl) AXPAttachments". The form has a header bar with the title and a "AXPAttachmentControl" label. Below the header, there are several input fields and a checkbox. The fields are: "Name" (value: AXPAttachments), "*Account ID", "*Account Authentication", "Control Options", "*Server Name", "*Storage Location", "*Max. Attachment File Size", "Reference Location", "Last Updated By", "Last Updated On", "Created By" (value: admin), and "Created On" (value: 2009-12-03 19:50:13). There is also a "Template" dropdown menu and "Load" and "OK/Cancel" buttons. A checkbox labeled "Disable transfer to external storage" is located in the top right corner of the form area.

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The administration of the storage server configuration does not require schema changes. Configuration is controlled using the ClearQuest record type AXPAttachmentControl. Here is a screen capture example of this record.

Only ClearQuest users with administrator or super user privileges are allowed to submit or edit this record. Only one instance of this record is allowed, as the package can only support the use of one FTP server per ClearQuest user database for all attachments.

Controlling attachment storage (2 of 2)

- The AXPAttachmentControl record contains configuration information, including:
 - Authentication information for an account ID with write privilege on the storage server.
 - The name of the server.
 - The storage location on the server, a path name.
 - The maximum file size for attachment files stored in the ClearQuest database.
 - The Control Options field must contain the value **TYPE=FTP**.
- A check box is available to enable or disable the external storage feature.

The AXPAttachmentControl record stores the authentication information used when connecting to the storage server. The account ID for the FTP server must have write privileges. The storage server address and storage location is also stored here. The storage location is a path name on the FTP server. What you use for the storage path will, in part, define the URL for the attachments of a record.

A configuration setting is available for limiting the size of attachments stored in the ClearQuest database in the event that the FTP server is not available. When editing a record, you can add attachments of any size to the Attachment field with the Add button. However, if the FTP server is unavailable, and that attachment exceeds the defined maximum file size, then record validation will fail when you try to save your changes. To continue, you have to remove the attachment or discard your record changes. If you do not want to define a limit for your environment, you can use a value of -1 for the setting in the AXPAttachmentControl record.

The Control Options field must contain a "TYPE" value. Because FTP is used with this package, you can only use the value TYPE=FTP.

A check box is available on the AXPAttachmentControl record that allows you to enable or disable the external storage server configuration. When enabled, attachments are transferred to the storage server as configured in this record. When disabled, attachments are stored in the ClearQuest database. Additionally, when the package is disabled, the file size limit defined in the AXPAttachmentControl record is ignored.



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