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New in this Release

This section lists the enhancements to Answer Server version 11.5.0.

Conversation

The new Conversation answer system has been added. The conversation system allows you to configure real-time automated conversations to answer user questions and deal with requests.

You configure conversations by adding a task configuration JSON file, which contains information about the conversation tasks you want to run. The individual task configuration contains information about when to run each task, prompts to gather the information required to complete a task, and information about how to validate and process user responses. They can also contain information about how to acknowledge a complete task and how to route to additional tasks, if required.

You create a conversation session by using the `ManageResources` action. After you create the session, you can use the new `Converse` action to start and continue the conversation.

For more information about the Conversation system, refer to the *Answer Server Administration Guide* and the *Answer Server Reference*.

General

- Answer Server now initializes the embedded Education module when the server starts, to improve responsiveness when you first send an `Ask` action.
- Answer Server now forwards the `ActionID` parameter to requests that it sends to its child servers (such as the Answer Bank Agentstore). When a request generates an index action (such as a `ManageResources` action), it converts the `ActionID` action parameter to the `IndexUID` index action parameter.
Answer Server also generates `ActionID` and `IndexUID` values for internal actions that it sends.
- The `[Query]` configuration section has been renamed to `[Ask]`. For backwards compatibility, you can still use the `[Query]` section name, but it has been deprecated and might be removed in future.
- The `AllowedQueryParameters` configuration parameter has been added to the `[Server]` section. You can use this to specify a comma-separated list of parameters that Answer Server must pass through to its child components. For example, you might use it to add tracking parameters or to include additional query restrictions.
- The `Timeout` parameter has been added to the `Ask` action. You can use this parameter to specify a timeout, after which the action stops waiting for further results. You can also configure a default value for this parameter by setting the `Timeout` parameter in the `[Ask]` section of the configuration file.
- You can now set up log streams for each Answer Server system, to log system-specific messages. The `LogTypeCSVs` parameter now accepts the values **answerbank**, **factbank**, **passageextractor**, and **conversation**, to set up log streams for each system type.

- You can now configure GSS authentication on the ACI and service ports without using ACI encryption. In this mode, all connections to the ports must be authenticated using GSSAPI and the Negotiate HTTP authentication mechanism.

To use GSS authentication, you must set the `GSSServiceName` parameter in the `[Server]` section to the full service name, domain, and Kerberos realm for the service. You can then set the `RequireGSSAuth` parameter in the `[Server]` section to enable GSS authentication on the ACI port, and set `RequireGSSAuth` in the `[Service]` section to enable GSS authentication on the service port.

NOTE:

You cannot configure `RequireGSSAuth` with the `[ACIEncryption]` configuration options. If you attempt to configure both, the server does not start.

This method provides an authentication requirement only. HPE recommends that you use it in conjunction with TLS/SSL to encrypt the authentication data.

- You can now configure Answer Server to use GSS authentication to communicate with its child components. The `AgentstoreGSSServiceName` and `IDOLGSSServiceName` parameters have been added to the system configuration sections. You set these parameters to the service name of the subcomponent. You must also set the host parameter (`AgentstoreHost` or `IDOLHost`) to the fully qualified domain name for the child component server, which Answer Server uses to retrieve the realm. Answer Server then uses GSSAPI authentication to connect to those child services.
- All ACI server ports now support the `Expect: 100-continue` HTTP header. Previously, third-party client applications that used this header (for example, using the `cURL` utility with the `-F` option to POST form data) could experience increased latency when communicating with the ACI server.

Passage Extractor

- You can now set query parameters for candidate retrieval queries that passage extractor sends to the data IDOL Content component. To use this option, set the `CandidateRetrievalDefaults` parameter in your system configuration to the name of a configuration section that contains the Query action parameters that you want to use.
- You can now modify the query operator that Answer Server uses in passage extractor queries, by setting the new `CandidateRetrievalOperator` parameter in your system configuration.
- Passage Extractor question detection has been improved, so that it no longer returns results for ask requests that are not questions (such as individual keywords).

Fact Bank

- There are now Fact Bank grammar files available in French and Spanish.
- You can now include a source for your facts in the fact store SQL database, by adding a `sources` table with a list of the sources and source IDs, and including the `source_ids` column in your facts table.
- You can now restrict Fact Bank answers by using document security. To use this, you add Access Control List (ACL) and security type information into the `sources` table in your fact store, and you can define a display name for your security types in a `security_types` table. You must also configure security types in the Answer Server configuration file, in a similar way as for the

IDOL Content component. You can then send IDOL `SecurityInfo` strings to Fact Bank by using the `CustomizationData` parameter in the `Ask` action, in the same way as for Passage Extractor.

NOTE:

You do not need any security libraries to use ACL-based security in fact bank.

- The Fact Bank system configuration now allows you to configure a limit on the number of facts to retrieve from a SQL fact store back end. Set the `SQLLimit` parameter to the maximum number of values to retrieve. When your fact store is large, setting this option can reduce the time that certain queries take.
- Fact Bank grammar scoring has been improved, particularly for questions that contain negative properties and qualifiers.
- Fact Bank sorting has been improved. Fact Bank now sorts answers by time if they have the same score, returning the most recent first (Answer Server uses any time values in the returned fact). If there are identical times, or no times, Answer Server sorts the facts alphabetically.
- The Fact Bank installation now includes PostgreSQL schema files for the Fact Store tables, and a utility script that you can use to apply these schemas to a database, to make it easier to set up your fact store.

Answer Bank

- The Answer Bank system configuration now allows you to configure the location for index files that it generates to send to the Answer Bank Agentstore. You can set the `QueuePath`, `TempDirectory`, and `FailedPath` parameters in the Answer Bank configuration section to modify the directories that Answer Server uses to store the index queue, temporary and failed job data, respectively.

Resolved Issues

This section lists the resolved issues in Answer Server version 11.5.0.

- Answer Server would fail to start if a passage extractor system was configured without the `EductionGrammars` parameter.
- Answer Server could return unexplained error codes in log messages for errors during setup.
- The facts returned in Fact Bank metadata were not listed in a consistent order. Answer Server now returns the qualifiers in the same order as they were asked for, with additional qualifiers being given alphabetically by code.
- Fact Bank did not correctly handle dates from before the Linux epoch (before 1970).
- When an authorization role defined `Actions`, `ServiceActions`, or `IndexActions`, and the authorization role `Clients` parameter contained host names, calling the `ShowPermissions` action could result in an interruption of service.

Notes

These notes provide extra information about installing and using Answer Server.

- The [Query] configuration section has been renamed to [Ask]. For backwards compatibility, you can still use the [Query] section name, but it has been deprecated and might be removed in future.
- The `EductionLuaScript` and `TimeLuaScript` parameters are now required settings in Fact Bank system configurations. In addition, the `BackendType` parameter is required, but the documentation previously stated that it was not required.
- The IDOL Content component option for Fact Bank is deprecated. HPE recommends that you use a SQL database as your fact store.
- The following configuration parameters for setting server action authorization by client IP address have been deprecated:
 - [Server] `AdminClients`
 - [Server] `IndexClients`
 - [Server] `QueryClients` or `UserClients`
 - [Service] `ServiceControlClients`
 - [Service] `ServiceStatusClients`

You can now use the [AuthorizationRoles] configuration section to set up authorization for your servers more flexibly. These configuration parameters are still available for existing implementations, but they might be incompatible with new functionality. The parameters might be deleted in future.

Documentation

The following documentation was updated for this release.

- *Answer Server Reference*
- *Answer Server Administration Guide*