Product Review: RoboHelp (2017 Release) by Lightext, Inc.

We are excited to provide a review of the 2017 release of RoboHelp by Adobe Systems. Here are some of the key enhancements to an already great product and how we see these features helping our clients and help-authoring colleagues.

Customizable Responsive HTML5 Layouts

More emphasis is being applied to Responsive HTML 5 output which allows your content to automatically size to various screen sizes and devices (e.g., desktop, phone, tablet). The 2017 release kicked this feature up a notch by allowing the user to fully customize help so that it matches your corporate website.


Two modern "frameless" customizable layouts were added to this release which allows the user to access information more quickly. These layouts respond well to all devices and are accompanied by show/hide widgets and page sliders instead of a traditional "tri-pane" layout. What we find particularly advantageous is that by removing the frame, more topic content is available to the user. Navigation is also more intuitive and user-friendly.
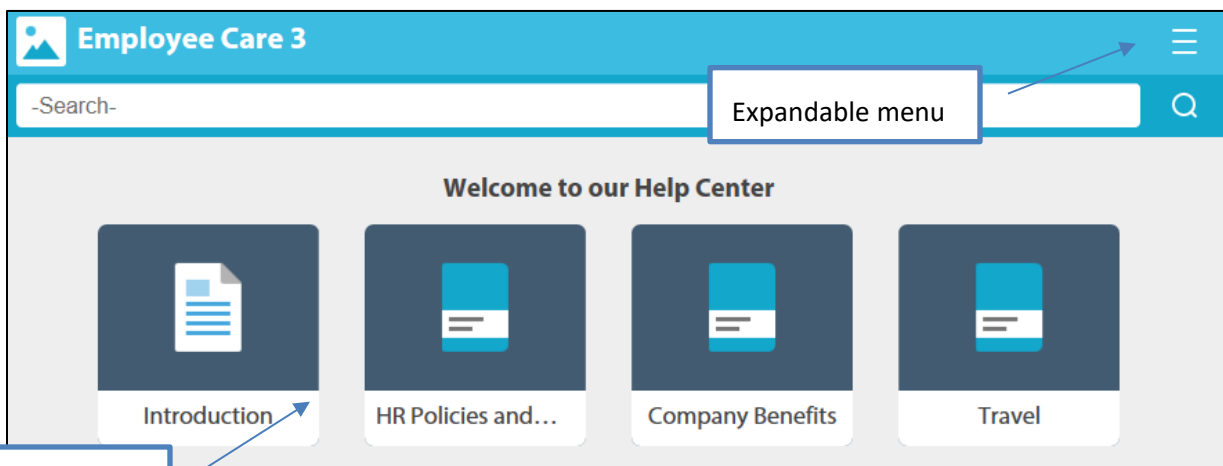
Enhanced Search

Everyone will love the new predictive search feature available in the new Responsive HTML 5 layouts in this release. Start typing in the Search box and users will receive contextual results which will help them find what they are looking for more easily. This search even accommodates spelling errors!
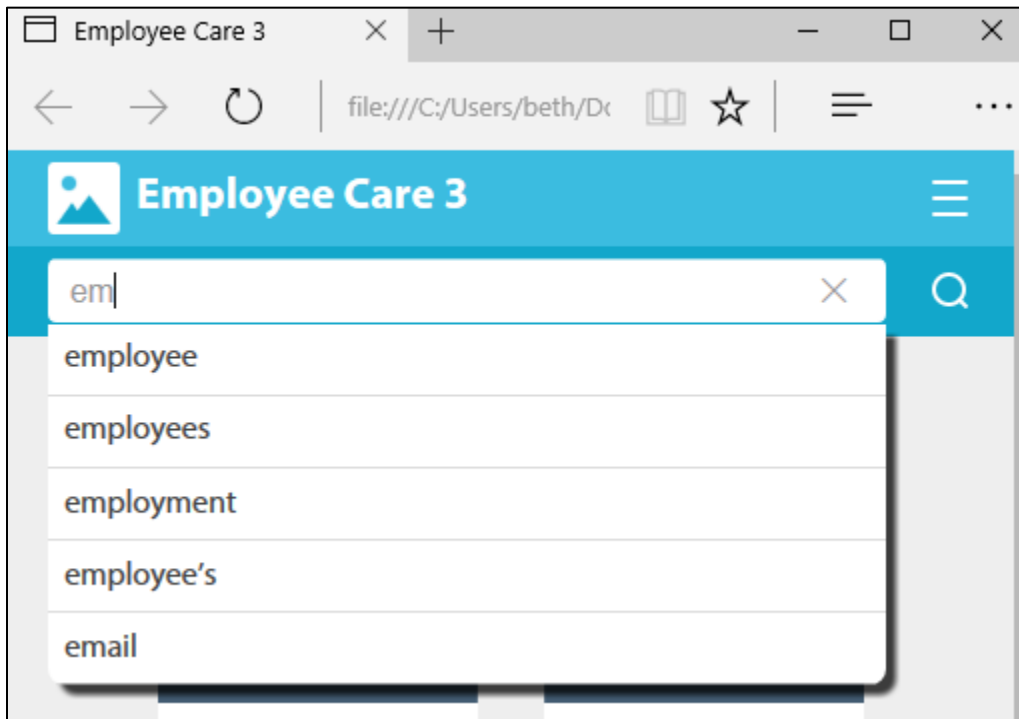
This feature is likely to improve productivity for employees and increase client satisfaction for those who use their help to assist customers or colleagues (e.g., call centers, internal help desks, etc.). This improvement to search will make the help system a more valuable resource overall.
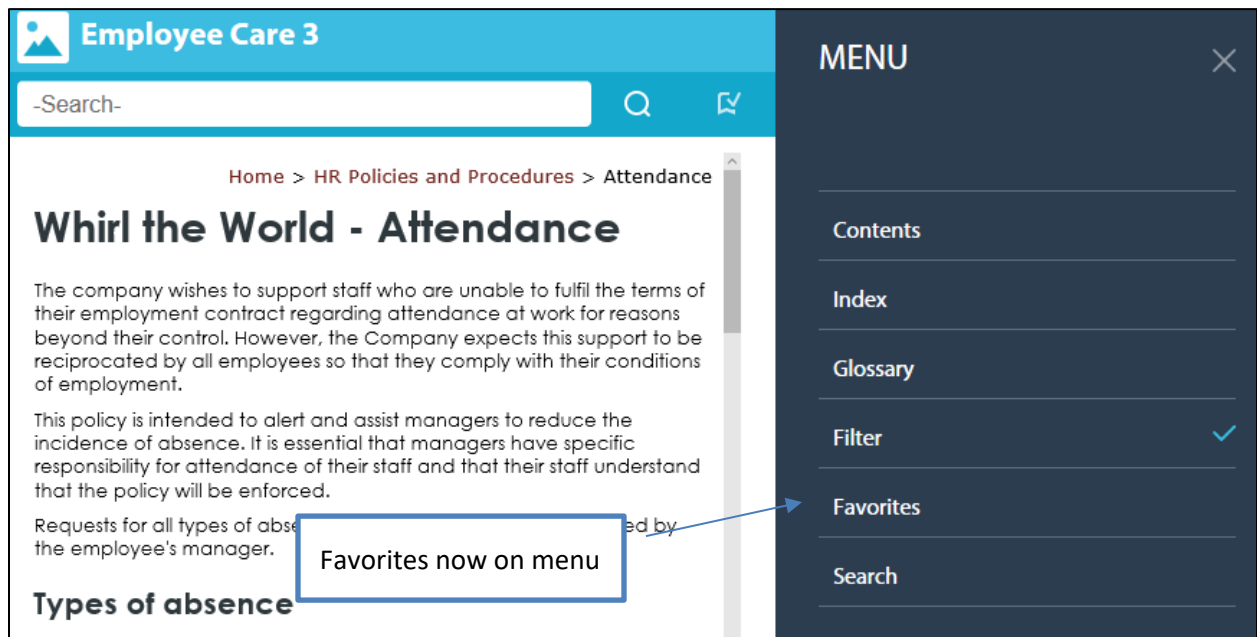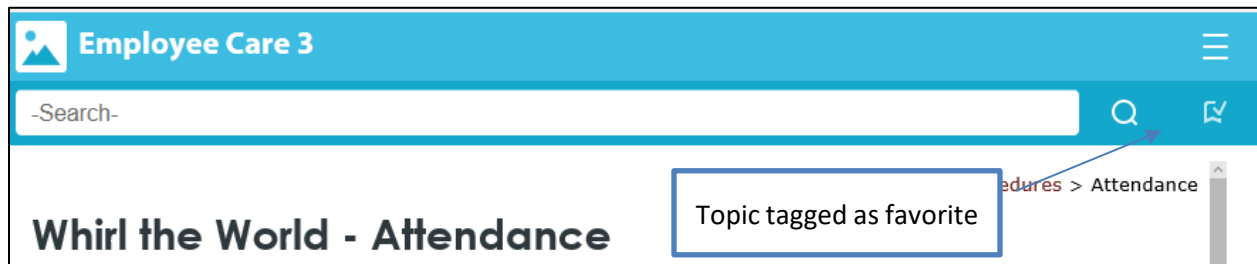
Add Your Favorites!

Along with predictive search, users can now tag favorite topics in their help systems when utilizing one of the new Responsive HTML 5 layouts. This has been a popular request and one users will love!


Expand your Audience

With the new Indigo layout for Responsive HTML 5, your content is **508 compliant** for your special needs users. This feature complies with web accessibility standards.

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Thumbnail Support for Images

This release allows the author to publish images as thumbnails. This is particularly useful for user manuals that are screen-shot heavy. The page load time is reduced and the user has the option to click on the thumbnail to show the image, if desired. Content published on mobile devices in particular will benefit from this feature.

Authoring Enhancements

Here's a very cool feature that authors will enjoy. You can now **import folders into your baggage files** instead of single files. The importing process will retain the subfolder structure, if applicable. This is an important time saver when you have collateral in the form of PDFs, Power Point decks or Excel spreadsheets that are critical to your publication. From the Project Manager Pod, simply right click on Baggage Files, then select Folder. In less than a second, all of your selected assets will be in your project.
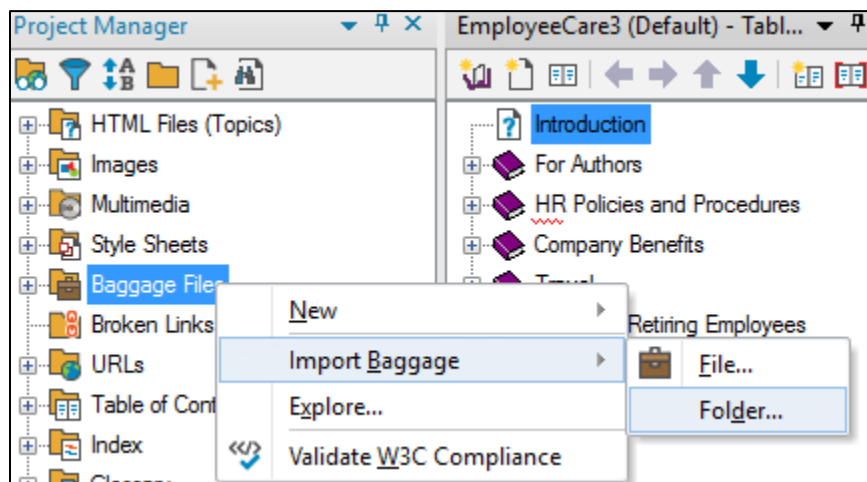
Another added feature to this release is the ability to **toggle variable views**. Using a keyboard shortcut or menu, you can now see your content as your users will see it – saving you the time of generating and viewing output for each variable.

Summing it Up

This release focused on a few major enhancements that really boost Responsive HTML5 output by increasing the ability for customization, enhanced search, and the addition of favorites. The help author will enjoy the time saving benefits of importing baggage folders and toggling variable views.

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Beth Gerber is co-owner and President of Lightext, Inc., a firm that specializes in quality consulting in the areas of policy and procedure development, curriculum design and training delivery. Beth began her career as a Vice President for Home Savings of America in California and was responsible for training, procedures, mergers and acquisitions, and loan servicing operational departments. In 1994, Beth took her expertise and opened a consulting company that models her commitment to high standards in the writing and training profession.

Lightext today employs a consulting staff of highly skilled professionals. They work with clients to develop and deliver customized training and policy and procedure solutions.

Several of these companies outsource their entire training and procedure departments to Lightext for ongoing support and maintenance.

Lightext prides itself in its ability to ascertain a client's total learning needs and provide a comprehensive solution that maximizes the use of resources, thus reducing cost and redundancy. Lightext recommends Adobe RoboHelp as the tool of choice for policy and procedure development and often help clients to create large interconnected libraries that can be single sourced to serve as the basis of classroom training materials and eLearning. Lightext offers unparalleled RoboHelp training with a comprehensive workbook for each participant.

In addition to consulting, Beth is a frequent conference speaker and Adobe Partner. Conference speaking engagements include Writers UA, STC Summit, and several Adobe Pre Conference events for these and other conferences. She has delivered over a dozen webinars hosted by Adobe covering detailed RoboHelp techniques as well as more generalized technical writing topics. Beth has also authored several RoboHelp Product Reviews.

Beth has a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the University of the Pacific and is a member of the Society for Technical Communication. Through Lightext she and co-owner, Pam Harrison, have developed a strong client list, including First Republic Bank, City National Bank, Union Bank, Far East National Bank, Grandpoint Bank, Prospect Mortgage, Korn/Ferry International, Pressed Juicery, One West Bank, PennyMac Mortgage Corporation, Wells Fargo, Mitsubishi Motors Credit, Capital Source Bank, Oak Tree Capital Management, The Loan Depot, Nisource, LA Metropolitan Water District, Pacific Western Bank, and Finance of America, to name a few.