

Using Merged Text with DISCPRINT

Three steps to putting merged text on a CD printing layout

1. **Defining the “fields” where the merged text will print on the layout.** A merge “field” is a variable text item placed on the layout. The variable text item’s name is preceded by a dollar sign (such as \$title). At the time the discs are printed, this variable is replaced by the actual merged text.
2. **Creating merged text.** The actual text to place on discs in the ImageMaker job comes from a merged text file. Typically, this information is created by a computer application, such as a database or in a text editor. The merge file contains the names of the variables you defined in the step above, plus the actual text to print in those variables’ fields.
3. **Running the CD-R production job and printing the merged text on discs during processing.** When including merged text on discs printed with ImageMaker, you need to specify the print merge file before you start the production job. This is done by going to the EZ-Layout Editor window, opening the layout to be used, then selecting the merge file from the File -> ‘Open merge file’ menu item. The merge file is read during processing, and the merged text is printed on each disc in the job.

Text items

There are two kinds of text items you can place in a layout:

Single-line text items: one line of text, of any length.

Text boxes include multiple lines of text within a box. Create a text box when inserting more than one line of text in the **Text Properties** dialog. Use the enter key to move to a new line. The box around the text is conceptual only (it doesn’t print on discs). The text within the box can be aligned to the left, center or right of the box.

Inserting Merge Fields

To insert a merge field for printing merged text, create a **merge field variable name**. This variable name can consist of any text *except* these characters: \$, #, and : (colon). Each variable name is preceded by a dollar sign (\$). The following are examples of valid merge field variable names:

`$title`

`$customer name`

Inserting System Variable Fields

System variables can be inserted in a layout as text items. A system variable is a “placeholder” that is replaced by a specific piece of information at the time the disc is printed. Defining a system variable field is similar to creating a merge field.

A system variable has a prefix of a pound sign (#) which distinguishes itself from normal text or merge fields. **DISCPRINT** knows to treat this text item as a variable. (Type the name of the

variable, including the #, in the **text** field of the **Text Properties** dialog.) Example:

The table below shows the available system variables and what information is inserted in the variable.

VARIABLE	DESCRIPTION
#Date	Current date (DD/MM/YY)
#Time	Current time, in 24-hour format (HH:MM:SS)
#Work_Order	Job name if known. Otherwise the generated CDRemote work order
#Drive_Number	ID of the drive that processed this disc
#Master_Name	Name of ImageMaker image used (if known)
#System_Name	ID name of ImageMaker system
#Serial_Number	The serial number of the disc being printed

A Note on Sizing Merge and System Variable Fields

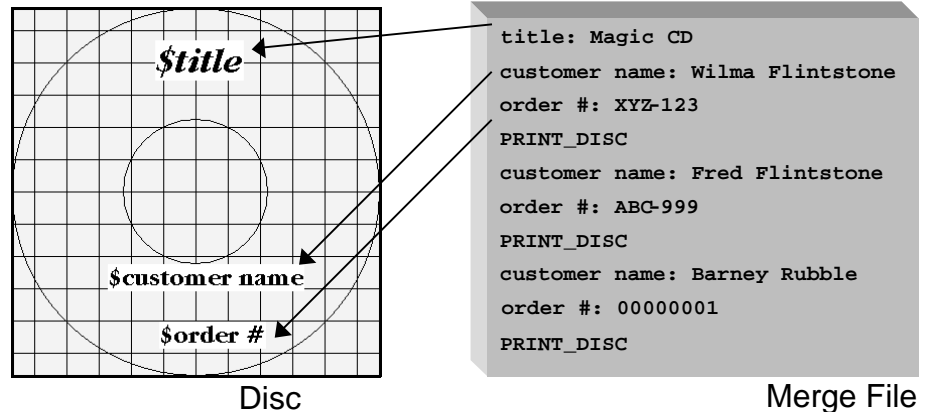
When a merge field or a system variable is inserted on a layout, as a *placeholder* for the actual text. Plan accordingly for the amount of actual text which may be printed in that field, and size the field accordingly.

The size of the text “box” surrounding the merge field or system variable will limit the amount of actual printed text which will fit in that box.

All attributes (font, size, color, etc) selected in the text dialog will be applied to the merged text or system variable. The **anchor** setting (left/center/right) of the text controls how the printed text will be positioned within the text box.

Creating Merge Files for CD Printing

When using merge files with ImageMaker MJ jobs where discs are printed, the actual text which is printed in the merge fields comes from a merge file. Merge files are plain-text (ASCII) files which contain the merge text and the names of the fields where that text prints.



The illustration above shows the relationship between a layout with merge fields and a merge file which fills in those fields. Notice that the field names (preceded with \$ in the layout) are the same in the merge file, except that the \$ prefix isn't used in the merge file.

Format of the Merge File

An *ImageMaker* print merge file consists of merge field statements. Each statement is in the form

field: text

where **field** is the name of the merge field, the same as the name used in the layout but without the starting \$, and **text** is the text to be placed in the field.

When all needed fields have been defined for printing a disc, the **Print_Disc** statement causes that disc to be printed. The example above has three **Print_Disc** statements, resulting in the three discs shown here:



Notes about merge fields

- **Not every merge field needs to be filled in to print a disc**

If any merge variable is omitted for a disc—that is, there is no entry for that variable in the merge file before the Print_Disc statement—then the previous value of that variable is retained. In the example above, all discs will have the text “Magic CD” printed in the **title field**, even though this variable is only defined for the first disc.

- **Merge variables start out blank**

Merge variables can be blanked, if desired, by putting a blank entry in the merge file. For example, to blank the **customer name** field, put in the following entry:

customer name:

- **Merged text can be combined into a single line of text.**

To do this, put a **combine** statement in the **DISCPRINT** layout file (done manually by editing the file). This statement names two or more merge variables which are to be combined into a single line of text when printed.

Some tips for creating and using merge files

- Merge files were created primarily to allow CDs to be automatically printed from a computer data source, such as a database. You can create and edit merge files “manually” however the real power and utility of this feature comes when the merge file is written without manual intervention. Contact Microtech for more information on how to create custom applications using merging.
- While merge files were designed to print unique discs within a job, you can also use them to create identical discs in a job. Simply create entries to print a single disc in the merge file, with one **Print_Disc** statement. The data in merge variables are retained, allowing the same entry to print all discs in the job