Projection Helper Administrator manual

This document provides information on the concept of Projection Helper (ProjHelp) and instructions on how to set it up and use the Advanced features. For instructions on how to use ProjHelp, see the User Manual. These documents are also stored at https://github.com/ke43ro/ProjHelp/wiki.

Concept

The concept of ProjHelp is to provide a simple interface for selection and projection of a short list of media files from a large, semi-static collection of files. Essentially, ProjHelp can be operated completely from its main screen. Short Playlists can be created by either a text search of the database file list or by using Windows Explorer to find files, then dragging them on to the Playlist. The Playlist can then be projected with one Play button.

The need for this application became clear to me when I became associated with an organisation that has a large (over 1000) collection of PowerPoint files containing lyrics of songs used in Christian worship. To assist management of so many songs, the files are stored in single-character subfolders named a to z, where this is the initial letter of the file name. The folders also contain Windows shortcuts to link common alternative names to the actual file. The "projectionist" is often a person who is not very savvy with computers and two problems arise:

- Navigating the folder structure is slow, resulting in a long break between songs, or
- The operator opens all the files in advance, changing the problem from navigating the file structure to navigating the running PowerPoint windows, and
- Lack of skill often results in the accidental moving of files within the folder structure.

A further problem is that the "alternate name" shortcuts become invalid if the files are moved or installed on a different computer.

My solution is to create an application that centralises all the necessary actions. It includes a database and functions that collect the file names. The database provides a second column in the file list to record the alternate names. When looking for a file, a text search is applied to both the actual name and alternate name fields to enable the operator to find the right file fast and project it instantly or add it to a list for projection at a planned time later.
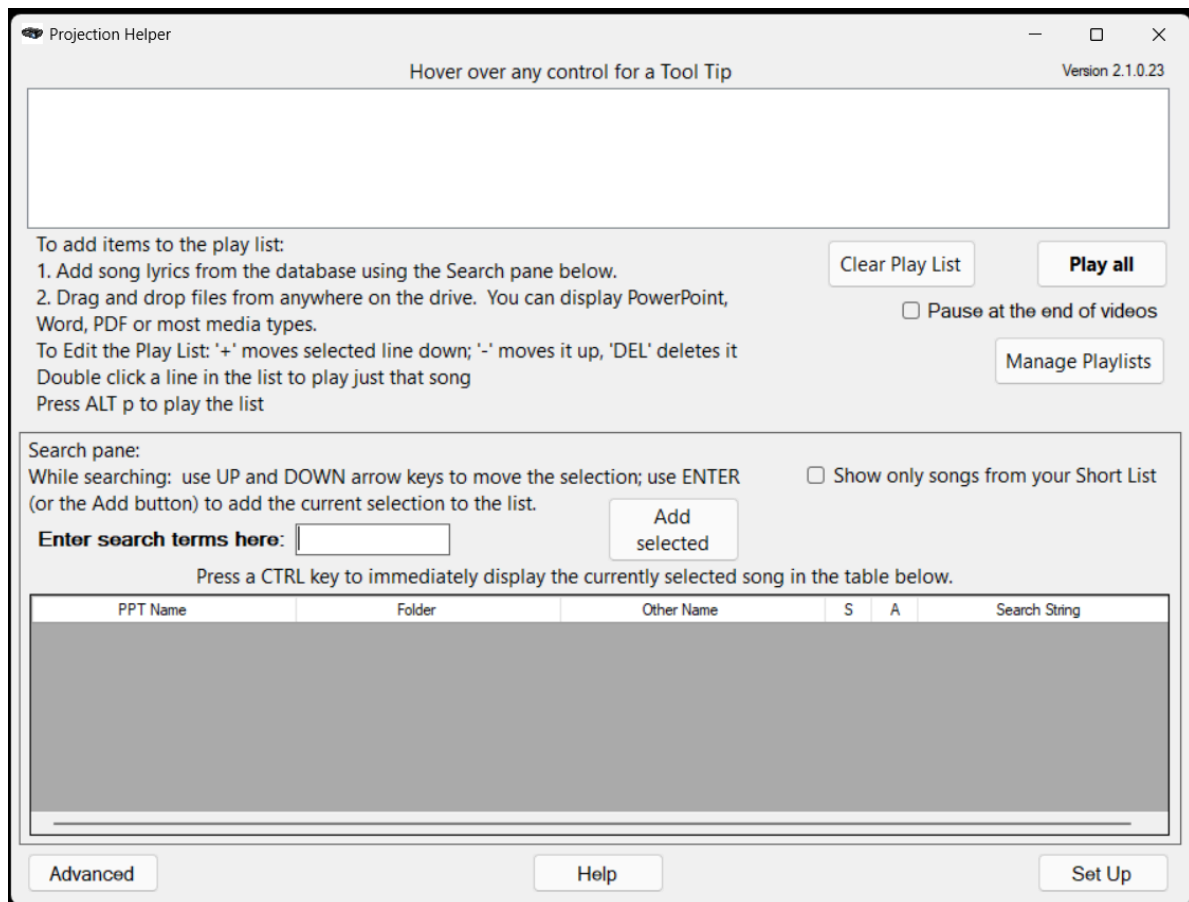
Setup

New Installations

You can use ProjHelp as installed with no further setup for drag and drop selection and display. To use it to manage a large collection of PowerPoint files, you will need to set the master folder name. If you have the PowerPoint files installed in folders as described in the Concept, the top-level folder must be named "MASTER" (case sensitive), which signals to ProjHelp to use the flat structure described above. If the top-level folder has any other name, ProjHelp will collect all PowerPoint files within that folder hierarchy.

ProjHelp is available as a ZIP file containing an MS ClickOnce installation package. It is recommended that this be expanded into a folder named ProjHelp in the Windows Downloads folder - see the section "Updates" for more information. Double-click on setup.exe to install. Any updates must be installed from the same folder.

The installation process automatically starts the program. There is no warning that any setup is needed. If you want to create a database of your PowerPoint file collection, click on the Set Up button. On most screens in ProjHelp, there are ToolTips that explain the purpose of the most significant fields and buttons.
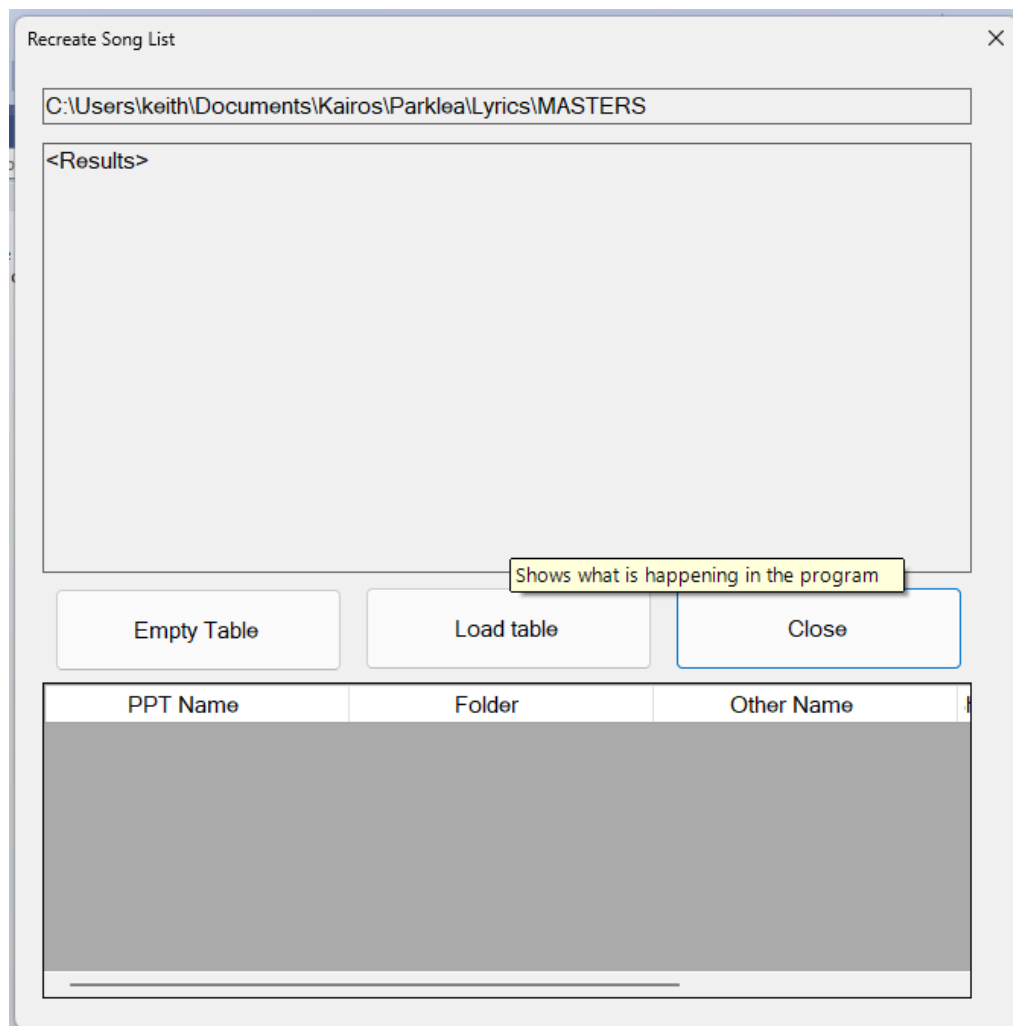
The main screen:

Press Set Up to continue. The Set Up dialog appears:
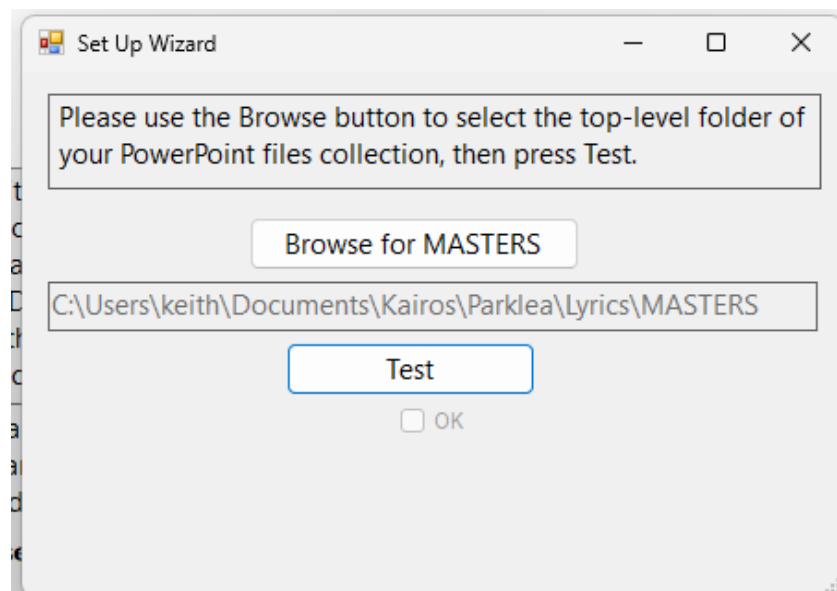
The Test button will be disabled unless your disk has a folder matching the default folder assumed by ProjHelp. If your collection is stored somewhere else, use the button Browse

for MASTERS to find the top folder (see the description in section Concept). Then Press Test.

Use the Load table button to scan the disk and enter records into the database. Close this dialog and the Step 3 checkbox will be ticked. At this point, the installation is complete and ProjHelp is ready to run.

If you have an Export file from another installation, you can run that now to set your Short List. See the Advanced section.

Updates

ProjHelp is available as a ZIP file containing an MS ClickOnce installation package. This format requires that updates be installed from the same location as the original. To bypass this requirement, the program must be uninstalled and reinstalled as new, which might delete your database or make it inaccessible. Completely uninstalling this type of application can be extremely difficult.

If your installation followed the recommendation, just extract the files from the most recent ZIP into the folder named ProjHelp in the Windows Downloads folder and run setup.exe from there.

If the new version requires upgrades to the database, these will be done during startup and then ProjHelp will close to force synchronisation. If you have skipped some versions, this might happen several times. Once the Main screen appears, ProjHelp should be ready to run.

Operation

ProjHelp is focused on providing the simplest possible operation. Instructions on how to use it will be found in the Projection Helper User Manual.

Advanced Features

The Advanced Features screen provides access to features that allow the administrator to maintain the database in good order and to synchronise a number of installations. It currently (v 2.1.0.18) includes six options:

1. Export or Import a list of files.
2. Edit the database (File List)
3. Update the File List
4. Compare your File List with the Master (stored on Google Drive)
5. Enable/disable the option to automatically add files to the Short List as you use them
6. Enable/disable the option to display Debug information. Note that turning this on will cause a lot of popups that interrupt operation. It is intended only for investigating system problems
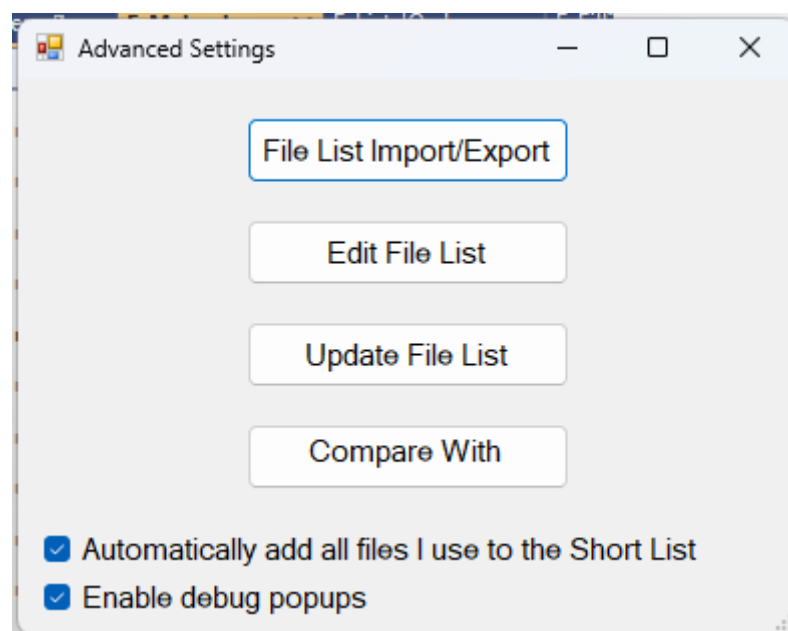
Export/Import

File List Export/Import opens a screen that gives access to extended options.
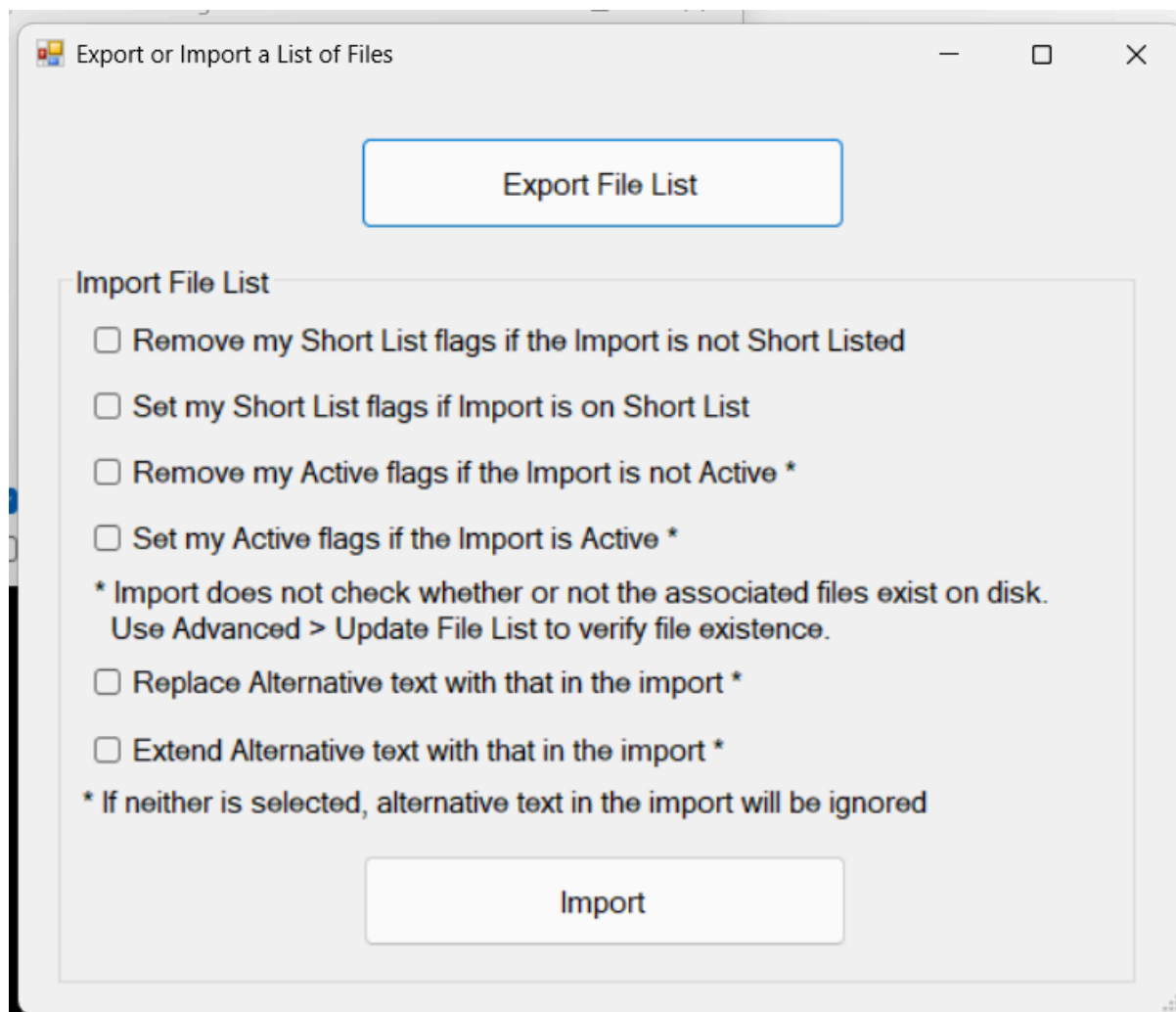
The Export feature creates a tab-delimited text file in the Documents folder containing a line for every record in the table T_FILES. The columns F_name, F_Path, F_altname, ShortList and Active are included and this file can be compared with that from other installations to check for differences.

Import

The import feature is intended mainly to ease installation on a new system and will allow the user to transfer the "ShortList" state, the "Active" state and "Alternative Names". It uses the Export file from another installation.

There are extensive options available:

Selected Flag

- Remove my Short List flags if the matching file in the Import list is not Short Listed
- Set my Short List if the matching file in the Import list is Short Listed

These two options are independent. If both are unchecked, no changes will be made in the installation that is running the Import.

Active Flag

- Remove my Active flags if the matching file in the Import list is not active
- Set my Active flags if the matching file in the Import list is active

These two options are independent. If both are unchecked, no changes will be made in the installation that is running the Import. NB: This feature does not check whether the relevant files exist on disk or not. The Update File List feature will synchronise the database state with the file system.

Import will also list files that are missing from either of the installations and it is possible to save this list as a tab-delimited text file for analysis at leisure.

Alternative Text
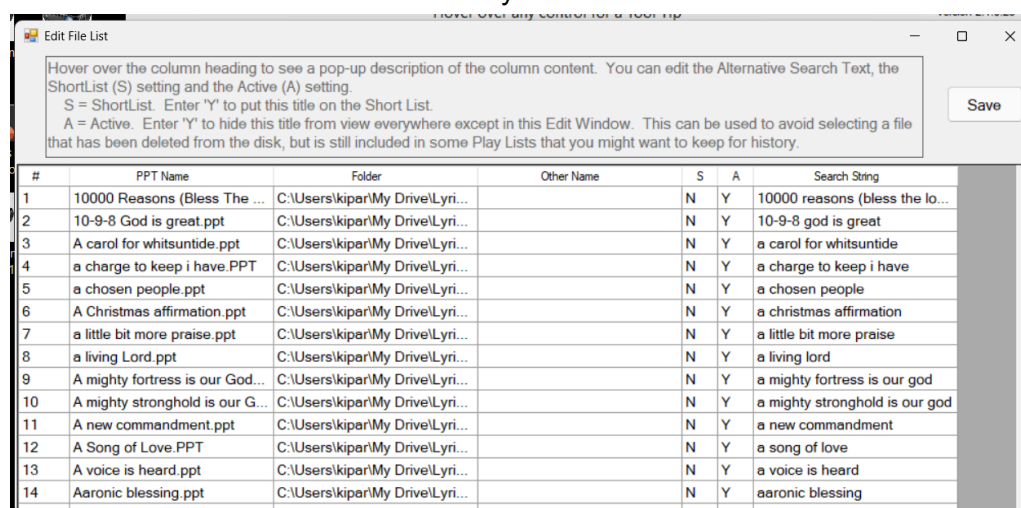
- Replace my Alternative text with that attached to the matching file in the Import list
- Extend my Alternative text with that attached to the matching file in the Import list

If both of these are unchecked, no changes will be made in the installation that is running the Import. However, the two options are mutually exclusive. If you tick one, the tick will be removed from the other. If you choose Replace, the process will replace all Alternative text where the matching file's Alternative text is not blank. If you choose Extend, the text from the matching file will be added to the end of the existing text, except where:

1. The incoming text is completely included within the existing text - no change
2. The existing text is completely included within the incoming text - the new text completely replaces the existing

Edit File List

The Edit feature provides a modifiable display of table T_FILES so that a skilled user can adjust the table manually for any reason. Possible objectives will be to add Alternative Text, or to alter the Active or ShortList status of any file.

Update File List

The Update feature is designed to keep your database synchronised with the collection of files actually on your disk. It will first remove any duplicate entries in the table. If the entry removed was included in a Play List, the list entry will be altered to point to the file that it duplicated. It will then run a scan of the disk to update the table records to match.
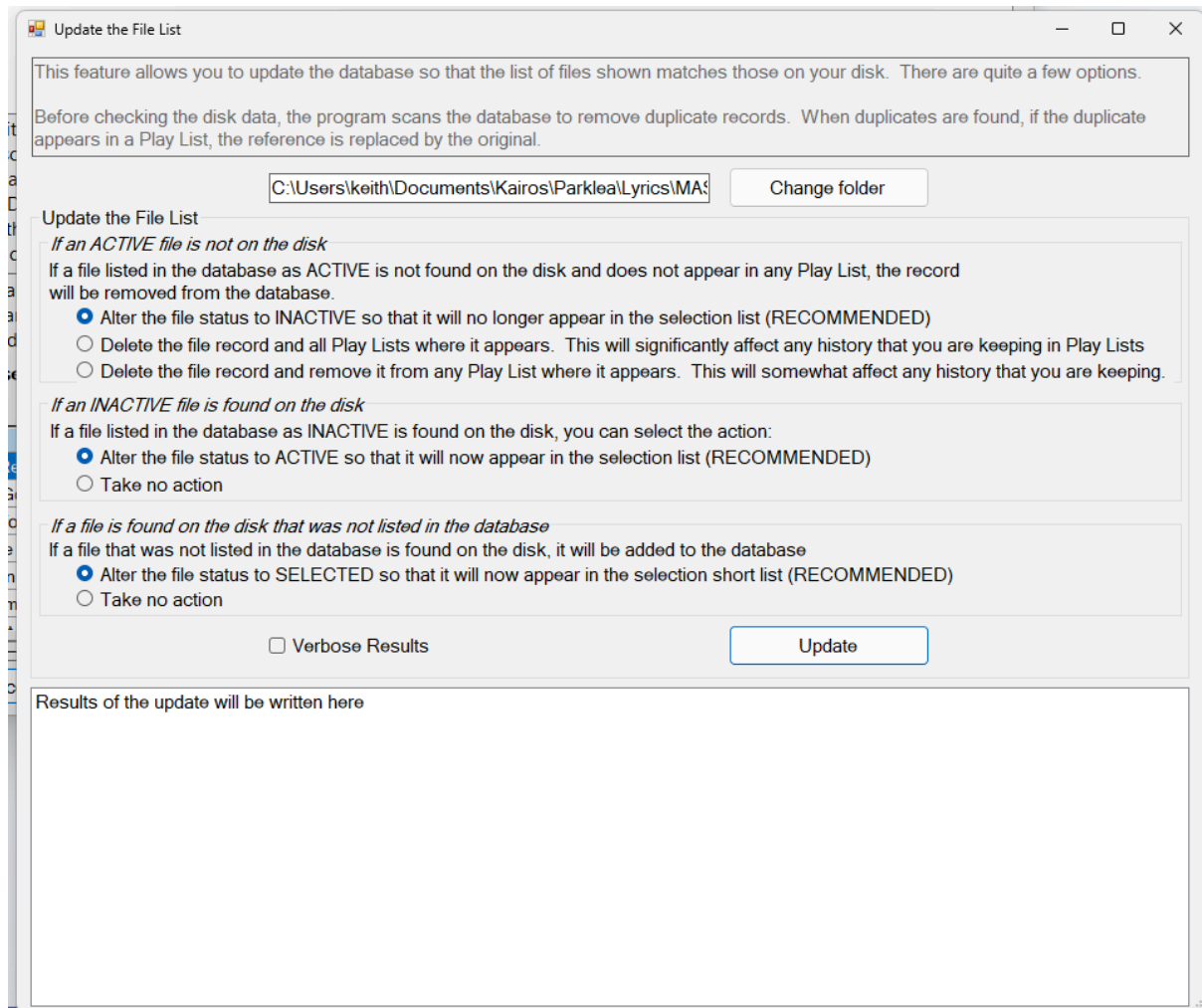

Options are available to:

- Add new files to the Short List if desired
- Mark records for missing files as Inactive or delete these records
  When records are deleted, there are further options to specify how to handle the records in any Play Lists.
- Mark entries as Active where the matching file is found on the disk, if desired
- Mark entries as not Active, if the matching file is no longer on the disk

The results of the update are stored in a List Box on the screen and can be copied and pasted into a word processor for analysis at leisure.

Compare With Master

There is a master copy of the Parklea Music File Collection stored in the Google Drive belonging to kiparkleajourney@kairos.org.au. This drive also holds a Sheet* named LyricsMatch that includes a script that will create a listing of all the files stored in the Backup. Save this sheet as a TSV file and it can be read by the Compare feature. Results are stored in a List Box on the screen and can be copied and pasted into a word processor for analysis at leisure.

* NB: On 19 June, 2025, I found that the script had disappeared from the Sheet. It is now a to-do item for the future.
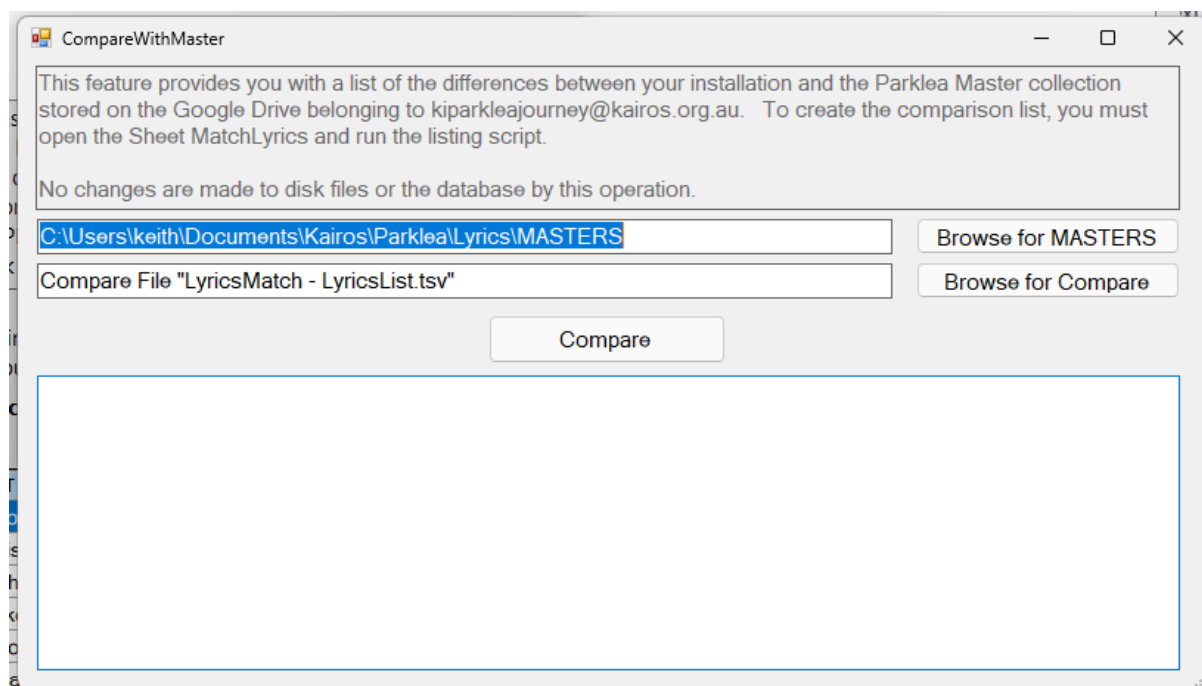
The MASTERS folder must be specified to match how the database has been set up. The Compare feature does not read the disk, but it needs to know where the files are kept so that it can match the entries in the Compare file. The Compare file is the file that was saved from the Cloud Storage.

Automatically add to Short List

The Short List is a set of records in table T_FILES that have the field *isShortList* set to Y. The Main screen has an option to only show these files, which provides a faster selection. If you turn the option off and use a file that was not previously on the Short List, ProjHelp will automatically set *isShortList* to Y if the automatic option is enabled.

Both options relating to the Short List are saved in Settings when altered, so ProjHelp starts up in the same mode as it was when you last used it.

Enable Debug Popups

This option enables pop-up messages in various places in the app and is very intrusive during operation. It would normally only be used if the developer needs your assistance to

trace a system fault. The setting is saved when changed, so that you can restart the program in whichever mode you last set.

Contacting the Author

The author of this program can be contacted through the online archive at:

https://github.com/ke43ro/ProjHelp

(You will need to create a [free] GitHub account to raise an Issue or see my email address)

Versioning

This manual applies to version 2.1.0.24 and later