

PowerPointLink Administrator manual

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

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Concept

The concept of PPLink is to provide a simple interface for selection and projection of a short list of PowerPoint Shows from a large, semi-static collection of files. Essentially, PPLink can be operated completely from its main screen. Lists can be created by a text search of the file list and the whole list 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 they open all the files in advance turning the problem from navigating the file structure, to navigating the running PowerPoint windows), and
- Lack of skill results in 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 really fast and project it instantly or add it to a list for projection at a planned time later.

Setup

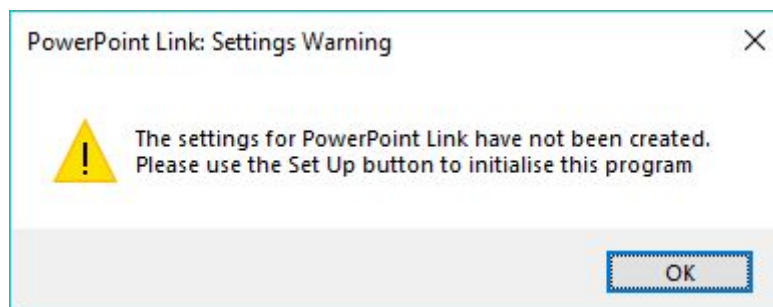
New Installations

New installations of PPLink require that MS SQL Express be installed. If it is not, it will be automatically downloaded and installed for you. Advanced users who already have a different SQL database manager installed might be able to forestall the installation. You will then need to know the connection string for your database for entry during setup.

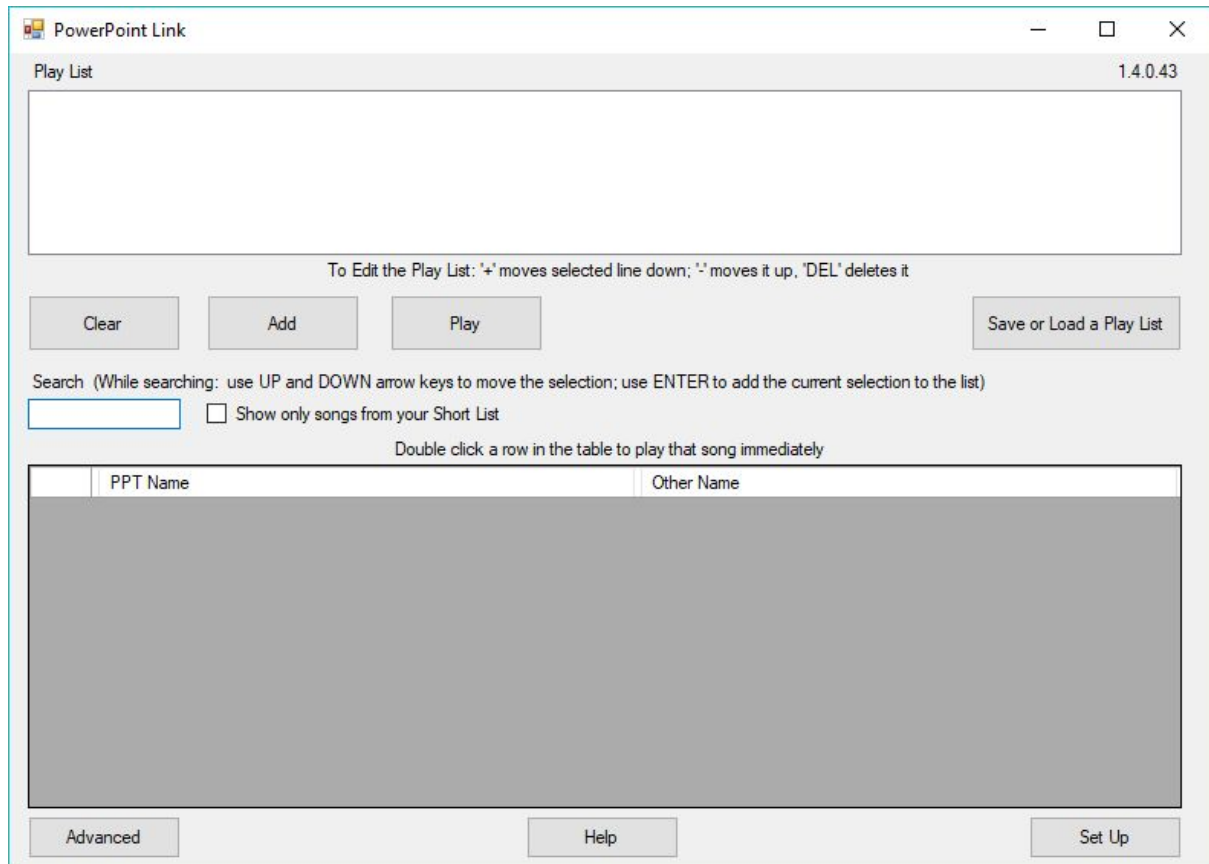
You need to have the PowerPoint files installed in folders as described in Concept before installing PPLink since a step in Set Up scans the files to build the database.

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

The installation process automatically starts the program and a warning will be given that it needs some setup.



Then the Main screen shows.



Press Set Up to continue.

Set Up Wizard

For each step, complete the entries as instructed then press Test
Successful changes are saved at once. Cancel button does not
revert values

Step 1: Set SQL Server

PowerPoint Link needs access to an SQL Server to maintain your song list. If there is no SQL server installed on this computer, please install one now. PowerPoint Link is designed to run with MSSQL Local DB so that is recommended. If you are using a different server that is already installed, type in its connection string below.

The usual connection string for LocalDB is "(LocalDB)\v11.0". Others are .\SQLEXPRESS or .\MSSQLLOCALDB. Click here for more information.

(LocalDB)\v11.0 Test

☐ Step 1. Waiting

Step 2: Connect to Database

PowerPoint Link needs access to a database that stores your show list. This database is named ProHelp and will be installed now if it is not already available.

ProHelp Test

☐ Step 2. Waiting

Step 3: Fill Database Tables

PowerPoint Link needs the database to be filled with correct path information for the files that make up your song collection. It is expected that the collection will be held within a folder named MASTERS and that songs will be stored in single alpha letter folders below this.

Browse for MASTERS folder

C:\Users\Keith\Documents\Kairos\ Test

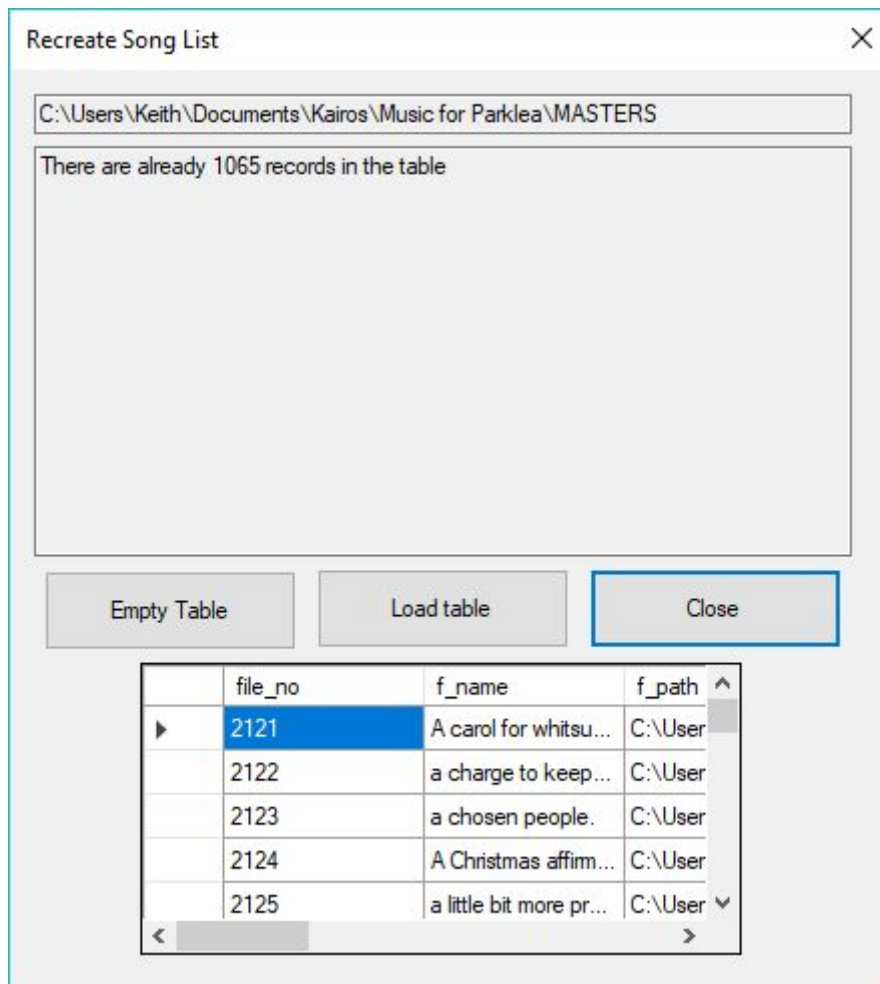
☐ Step 3. Waiting

OK Cancel

The default SQL Server should be OK if you have not previously installed a SQL server on the same machine. Press Test on Step 1. If it fails, you will have to try other settings. Click on the Step 1 instructions for some additional advice.

Once the checkbox gets ticked, click on Test for Step 2. If the specific database (ProHelp) is not found, it will be created.

Once the Step 2 checkbox is ticked, use the Step 3 button Browse for MASTERS folder to find the PowerPoint files collection MASTERS folder. 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 PPLink is ready to run. It will close first to allow the database installation to synchronise properly.

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

Updates

PPLink 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. The database will not be affected, but 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 PPLink 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 PPLink will close to force synchronisation. If you have skipped some versions, this might happen several times. Once the Main screen appears, PPLink should be ready to run.

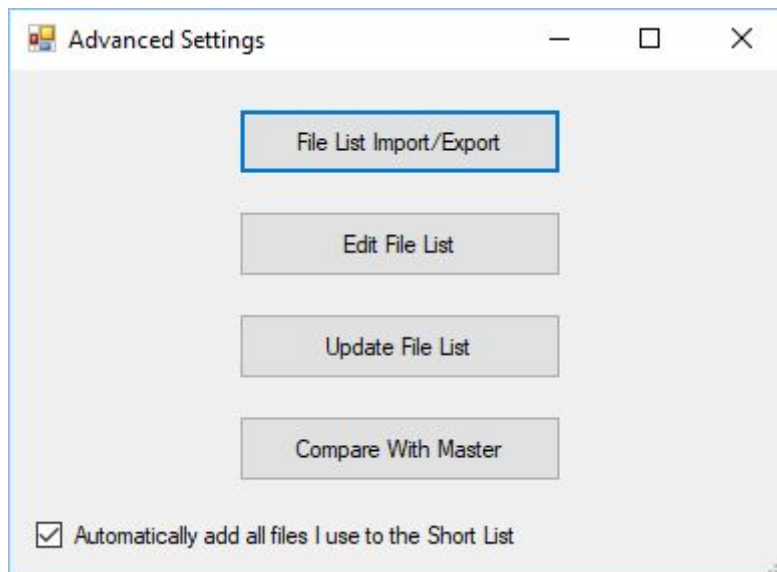
Operation

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

Advanced Features

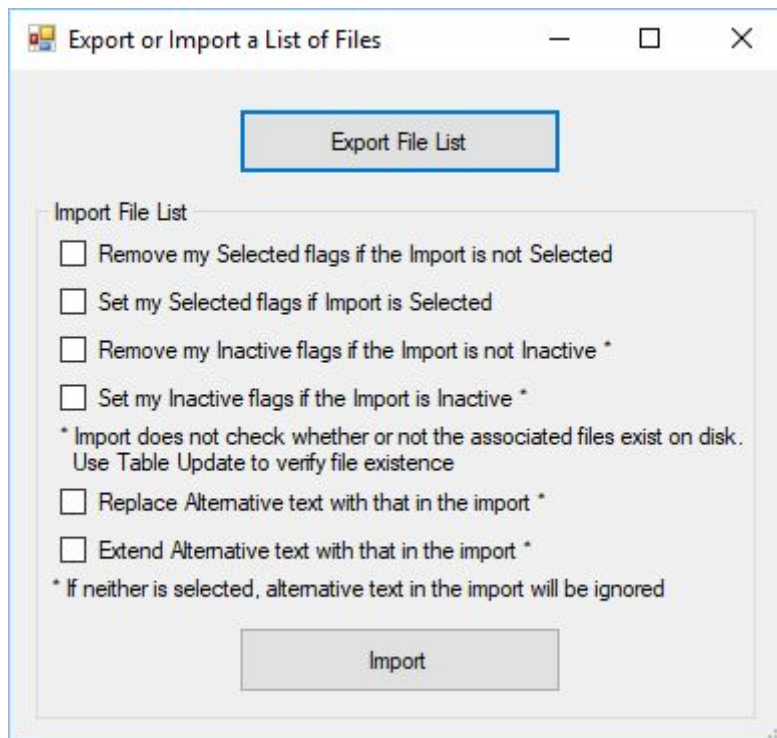
The Advanced Features screen provides access to features that allow the administrator to maintain the database in good order and to synchronise a number of installations. It currently (v 1.4.0.43) includes five options:

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



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, Selected and Inactive 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 "Selected" state, the "Inactive" state and "Alternative Names". It uses the Export file from another installation.

There are extensive options available:

Selected Flag

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

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

Inactive Flag

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

These two options are independent. If both are unchecked, no changes will be made in the installation doing 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 doing the Import. However the two options are mutually exclusive. If you tick one, the system will untick 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

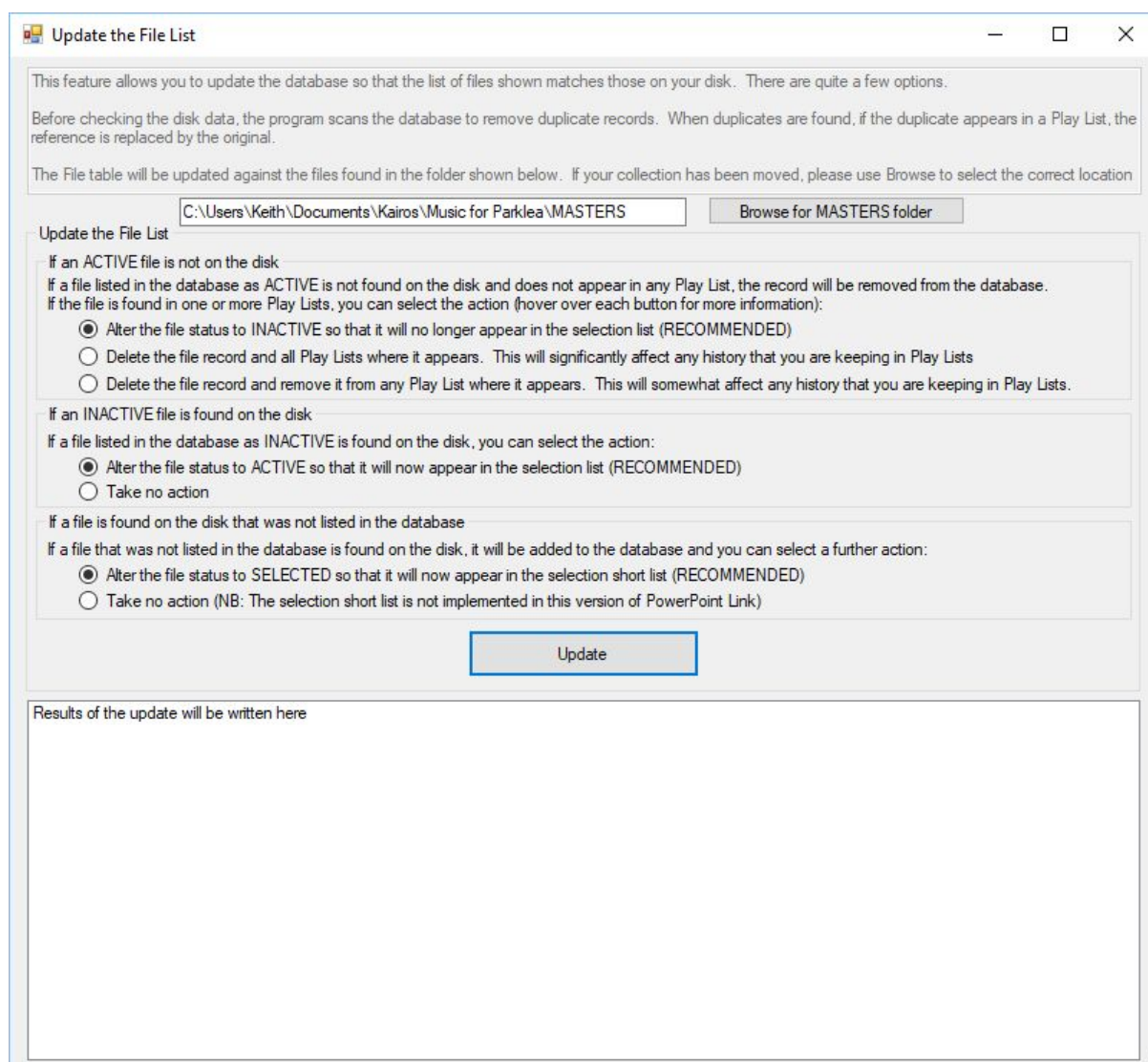
Edit File List

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, to alter the Inactive or Selected status of any file or to delete records that are redundant or no longer wanted.

NB: This feature should not be used to add new records to the table. See Update File List.

Update File List

The Update feature will 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:

- Set new files to Selected if desired
- Mark records for missing files as Inactive or delete these records

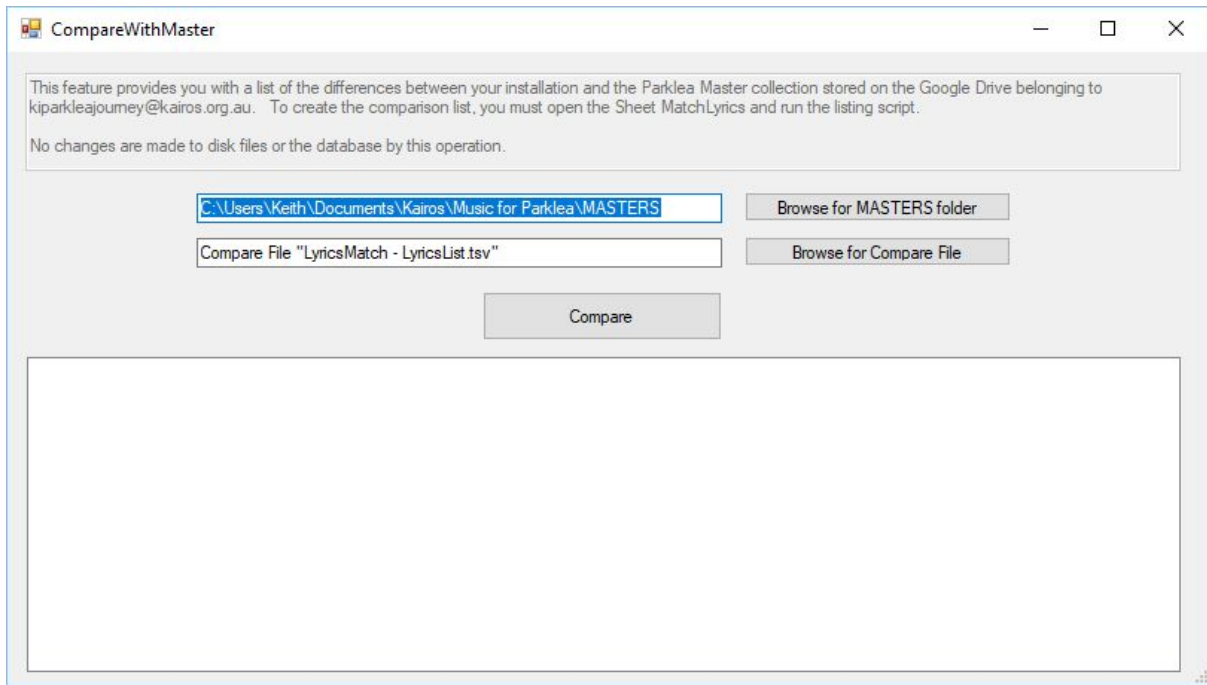
When records are deleted, there are further options to specify how to handle the records in any Play Lists.

- Remove Inactive marks on entries where the matching file is found on the disk if desired

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 as a Computer Backup on 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.



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 *selected* 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, PPLink will automatically set *selected* to Y if the automatic option is enabled.

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

Contacting the Author

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

<https://github.com/ke43ro/PPLink>

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