MAINSTAR

Myths and Truths About ABARS: Part III

By Colleen Gordon

Because Mainstar provides products that support DFSMShsm and ABARS, we hear many myths about ABARS from all over the world. This series of Informational Documents is intended to dispel these myths and communicate some truths that may be of interest to potential users of the DFSMShsm data mover, ABARS.

Myth #4: ABARS is not useful for local data recovery.

It's true that ABARS was designed specifically for application level disaster recovery; however, with the correct tools, ABARS can be a very useful local recovery solution as well. In today's technologically rich environment, DASD remote mirroring is quickly becoming an affordable solution for critical applications. When combined with mirroring, ABARS provides a comprehensive solution for both off-site and on-site data recovery.

Another reason why ABARS is a great tool for local recovery is because it can provide a synchronized backup of all data belonging to an application. By scheduling the ABARS ABACKUP event at the end of the application's cycle, you back up all data at the same point in time. This backup is generally more useful to applications than DFSMShsm automatic backup because it is taken at a time when the data is relatively static. DFSMShsm automatic backup may execute over several hours; therefore, data may be actively changing during its execution.

ABARS Manager, a selectable product of Mainstar's Backup & Recovery Manager Suite, makes local recovery possible with a robust ISPF interface and features that allow for searching and recovering one, some, or all data sets from any ABARS aggregate. The panels walk you through the process, providing search by data set name or a data set name mask. You don't need to know the name of the aggregate the data are backed up in. Simply type the name or part of the name into the panel to view all of the information regarding the data. Then, select one, some, or all of the data in the list to be recovered with a simple R recovery command. ABARS Manager will present recovery options including the ability to rename one or all of the nodes of a data set name. Press enter to launch the submission of a batch job that recovers and optionally renames the data. No JCL or knowledge of DFSMSdss is necessary for local recovery.

In addition to this functionality, ABARS Manager provides a complete inventory of all data backed up by ABARS and DFSMShsm automatic backup, if used. All backup versions can be easily displayed and the user can select any version of the data to recover. Not only are ABARS and ABARS Manager excellent tools for local recovery, but also, they help eliminate the "middle man" by providing for distributed access to the inventory of all data backed up so applications can manage their own recoveries. This is an added bonus because it reduces storage management resource requirements to support recoveries and enhances applications' productivity by providing information about their data backups that was never available before.

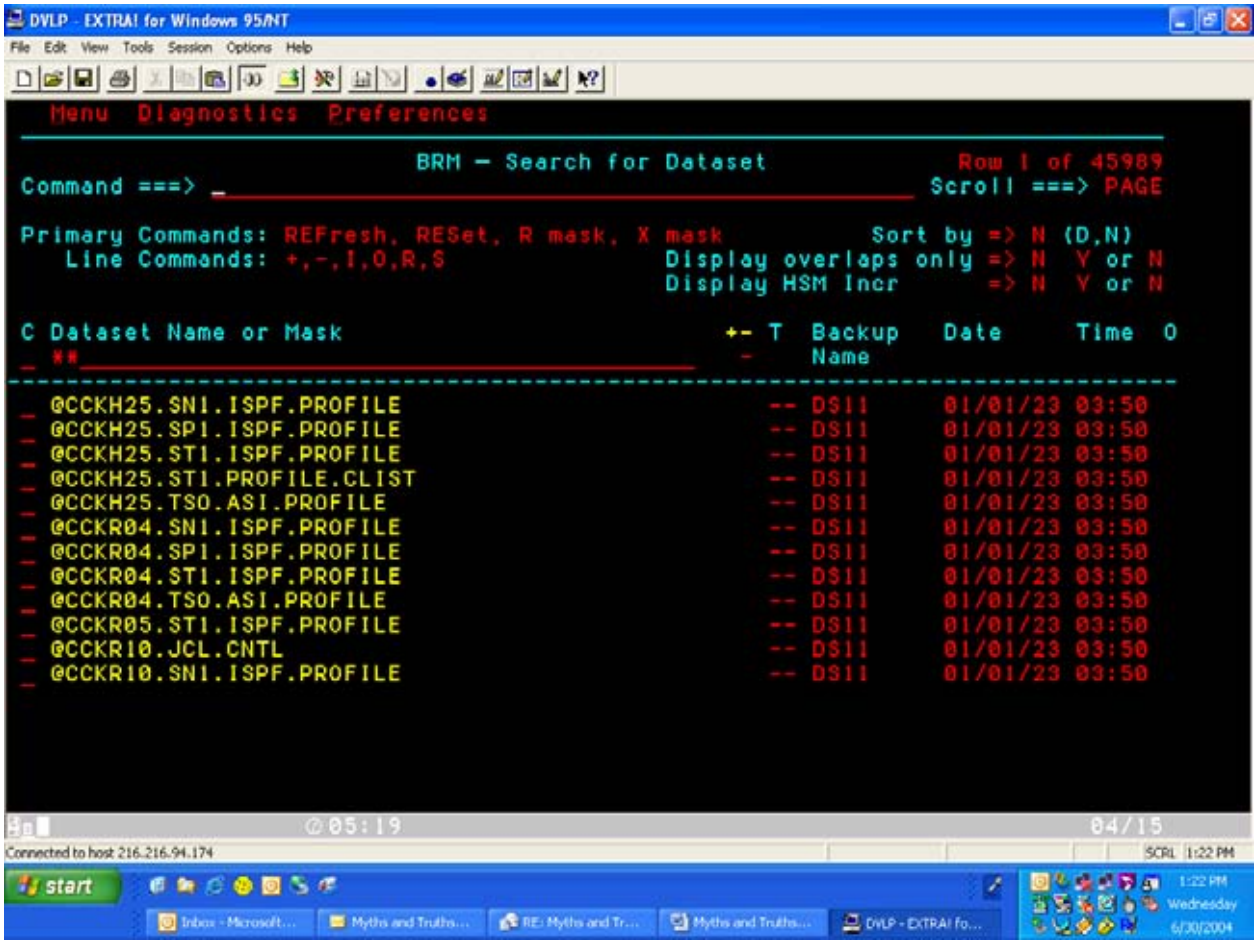

Figure 1. BRM Search for Dataset panel

Myth #5: ABARS backup events often fail.

ABARS was designed with data integrity in mind. By default, if a data set is in use, has an I/O error, isn't cataloged, couldn't be serialized, or has a variety of other issues, the ABACKUP event fails. This is because all the data in the aggregate cannot be backed up at the same point in time. To accommodate different environmental issues, IBM provides several exits, patches, and options to continue processing when these events occur. These exits, patches, and options provide more flexibility to manage data integrity issues not provided in DFSMSdss logical backup. For example, the ARCBEEXT allows bypassing data sets that are not cataloged or that have I/O errors. This is not available in DFSMSdss, which would fail the backup should either of these issues occur. To manage serialization issues, IBM provides the Copy Serialization option in the ABARS aggregate setup panel, allowing users to specify CONTINUE rather than FAIL. CONTINUE allows a "fuzzy" backup of the data set if it is serialized at the time of backup. There are several exits and patches available and each one should be reviewed and carefully considered. For more information on ABARS exits and patches, see the White Paper entitled DFSMShsm Installation Exits and Patches, available for download on the Mainstar web site.

Find out more.

Mainstar offers a variety of ways you can find out more about ABARS, ASAP, and Backup & Recovery Manager Suite. Attend Mainstar's ABARS Made Simple webcast for information on how to

manage today's ABARS environments. On our web site, www.mainstar.com, you can download numerous White Papers and Informational Documents on ABARS and Mainstar's products. If you have any questions, contact us at experts@mainstar.com or contact Mainstar's Technical Support.

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