# RipControl

**Load balancing software for Harlequin RIPs**

# User and Installation Manual

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# Contents

# 1   Introduction

RipControl is a stand-alone application used to feed multiple Harlequin-based RIPs with jobs. RipControl takes care of job distribution ensuring a uniform load of each RIP.
The present version of RipControl supports up to three RIPs.

RipControl may be installed as stand-alone or as an integrated part of the ControlCenter Enterprise workflow system. In the latter case RipControl will have access to production data in the ControlCenter database and will look up job details for each job arriving to RipControl. Based on production data job priority, colors-per-page and format information RipControl will determine the best order and RIP page setup in the job scheduling process.
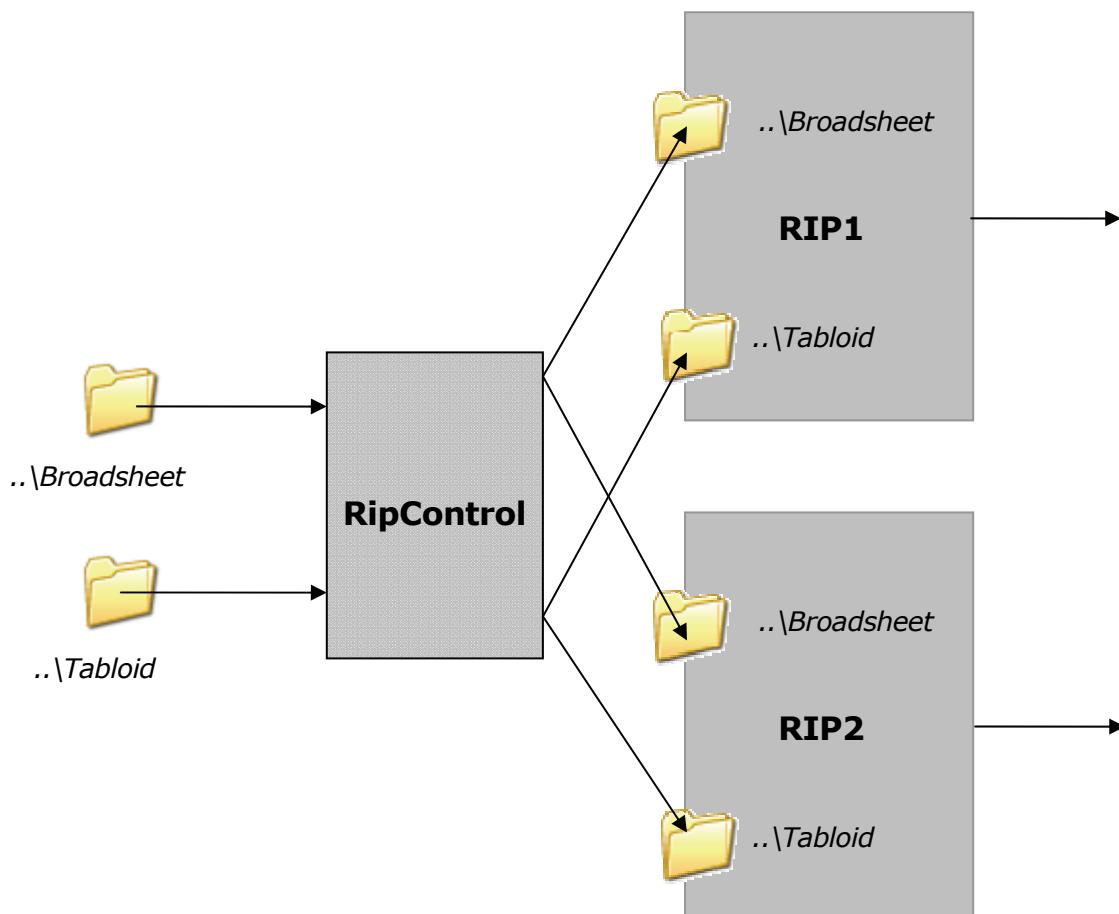
RipControl  is meant to run unattended watching input folders for incoming PDF, PS or EPS files. A set of input folders on RipControl are mapped to folders on each RIP.

The RIPs are tracked for activity. RipControl observes that the RIP is started, that input spoolers are enabled and that ripping is taking place. Each job is tracked also, allowing status feedback to the ControlCenter database.

## 1.1    Prerequisite

RipControl needs network connection to each RIP. The installation folder for each RIP must be accessible for RipControl in order to track the Harlequin log-files.

This manual will not describe how to configure the rip Page Setups and RIP Input spoolers. Refer to Harlequin user manual for details.

An optional progress plug-in can be installed on each RIP. This will provide more detailed progress on the on-going job (like progress bar indicating ripping progress). Note that the progress plug-in will not influence the basic operation – it is merely informational.

By default the input works on hot-folders only. In case incoming jobs are sent using published printers, an extra utility called RedMon must be installed (located on the CD).  RedMon (Redirect Monitor) redirects print streams to spool files eg. for published Windows or AppleTalk printers.

# 2 Operation

## 2.1 The User Interface

Operation is very simple once the RipControl has been configured. Simple launch the program and the RIP balancing will start – using available and online RIPs.



Incoming jobs    Jobs queued for ripping    Jobs done
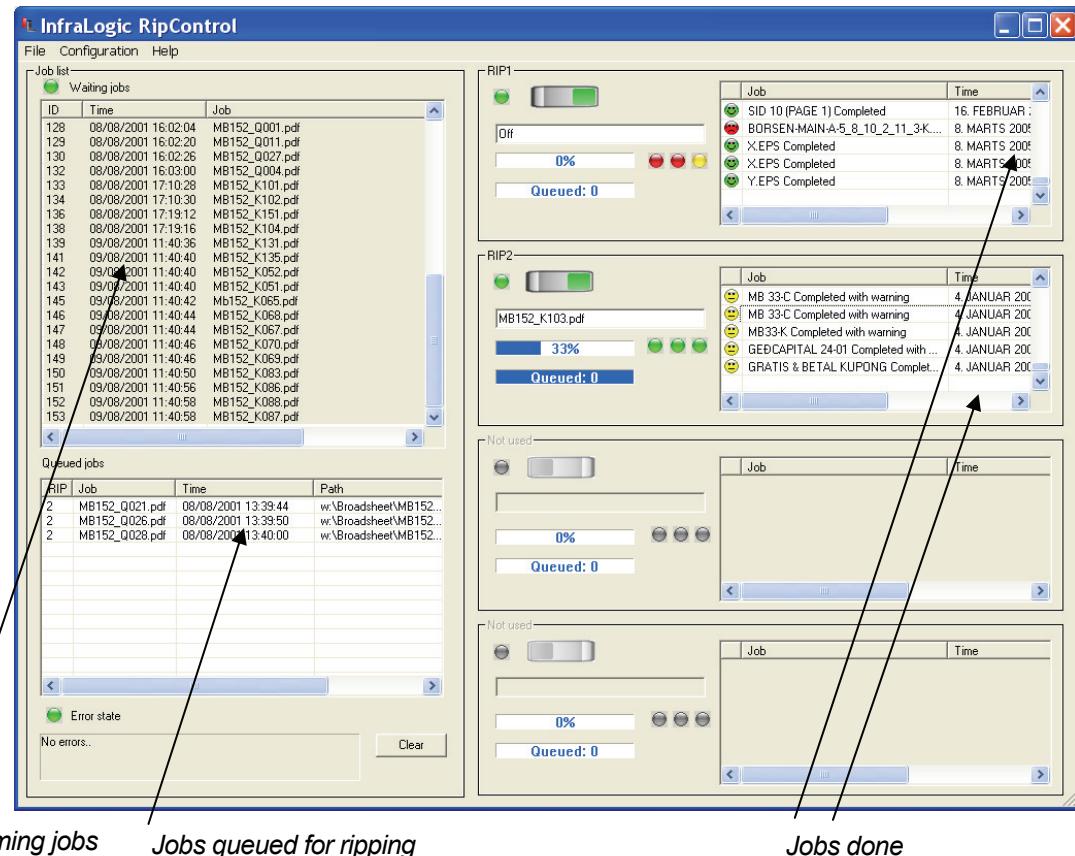
*RipControl main GUI*

RipControl is meant to run unattended watching input folders for incoming PDF, PS or EPS files.
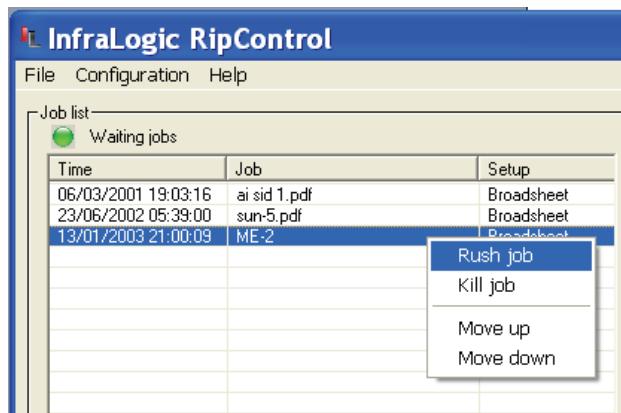
*Pop-up menu accessed when right-clicking in the Waiting job list*

The left hand side lists the incoming jobs waiting to be queued on the RIPs. The list (top left) will be processed in a first-in-first-out fashion with the top item being the next job to process. The operator may overrule this using the right-click menu (see next section).

The right hand side shows the state of the RIPs. An on/off button may enable or disable RIPs from the load balancing.

Three lamps next to the progress bar show the running state of the RIP:

|  |  |
|---|---|
| First lamp green | RIP program is running |
| Second lamp green | RIP Inputs (hot-folders) are enabled |
| Third lamp green | A job is ripping |

The right hand list shows jobs already processed. The green, yellow and red indicators show if a particular job is ripped successfully, with warning or with error.

**Changing job queue**

To optimize load balancing RipControl makes sure RIPs are kept busy with jobs. However, to avoid overstressing one particular RIP, only a few jobs are queue per RIP at any given time. Therefore a number of jobs will be waiting in the left hand side list before being assigned to a particular RIP. In case a certain job is important it can be moved up in the queue. Highlight the job(s) and select **Move up** or **Rush job** to move the jobs forward in the queue.

**Error handling**

Folder access errors (e.g. due to network errors) will be shown in the error box. Optionally an audio alarm can be issued. To clear the error message press the **Clear** button

A user defined command can be issued in case an error occurs. The command could be an external script issuing an email message or an sms message.



*Errors will be shown in red in the bottom left corner*

# 3    Configuration

Configuration dialogs are accessed from the main menu **Configuration** item. Configuration is divided into database connection setup, RIP access configuration and input configuration.

## 3.1    Database connection setup

RipControl uses an ODBC DSN for accessing the ControlCenter database. The ODBC is automatically set up during installation but may be changed using the *Configuration->Setup database..* menu.
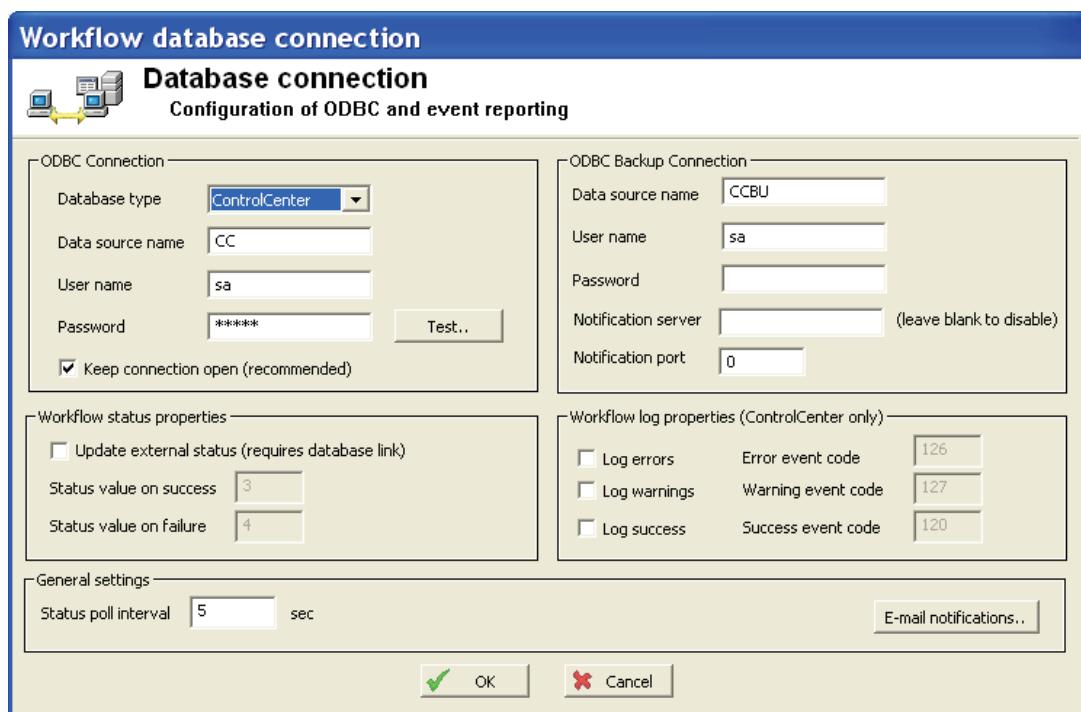


Enter login parameters and test the connection using the **Test** button.

In case a backup ControlCenter server is also installed set the ODBC for the backup machine also.

For tight ControlCenter integration RipControl can report and log to the ControlCenter production database.
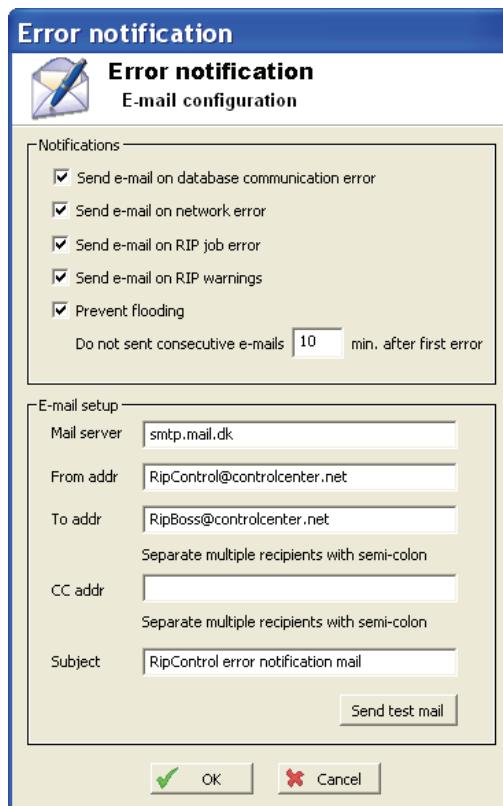
## 3.2    E-mail notification

If required RipControl can be configured to automatically send mails of events such as RIP errors or warnings. Click the **E-mail cotifications..** button in the database setup dialog and set mail-server, recipient list (separate multiple recipients with semi-colon), CC recipients etc.

## 3.3    RIP configuration

The location of the RIPs must be  entered into the system. Enter computer name (used for logging) and the path to the SW subfolder for each available RIP

Also check the types of events that should be logged to the ControlCenter system

In the General preferences box a number of important settings must be set:

*Maximum outstanding jobs on each RIP*

Internally a harlequin RIP can handle up to two jobs simultaneously. The minimum number of jobs which should be fed is thus two (if jobs are available). To cope with potential lag in the copy process into the RIP folder, a good number is 3 or 4.

*Stable time for incoming jobs*

Even if RipControl ensures that incoming files are not processed before they are fully build up, certain file sources may build up the files gradually opening and closing the files. Set stable time to indicate when the file is completely written. Stable time is an interval in which the file size and last-access time is not changing.

*Files/extensions to ignore*

A semi-colon separated list of file masks which should be ignored – e.g. temporary files or house-keeping files created by the server.
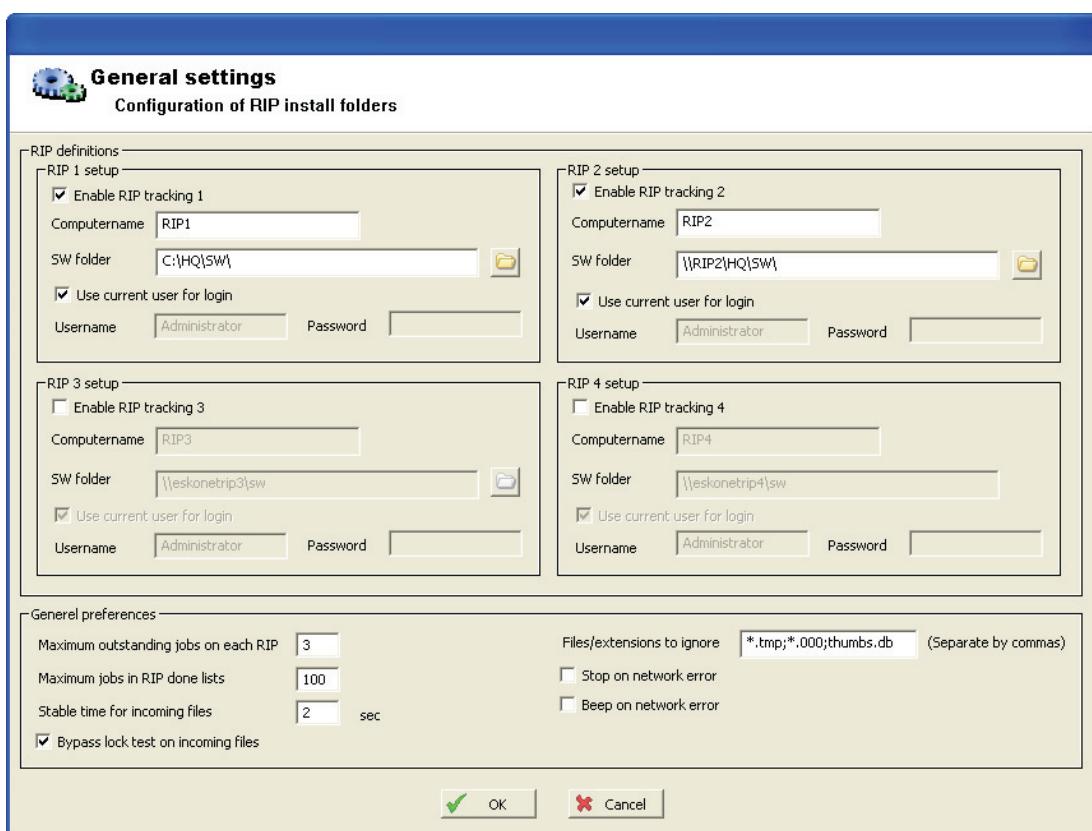


## 3.4 Input queue configuration

Input queues link the input folder to the two or three hot-folders on the available RIPs.

Use **Add**, **Edit** and **Delete** buttons to maintain input queues.

*Setup name*

Enter a name for the queue (name not important)
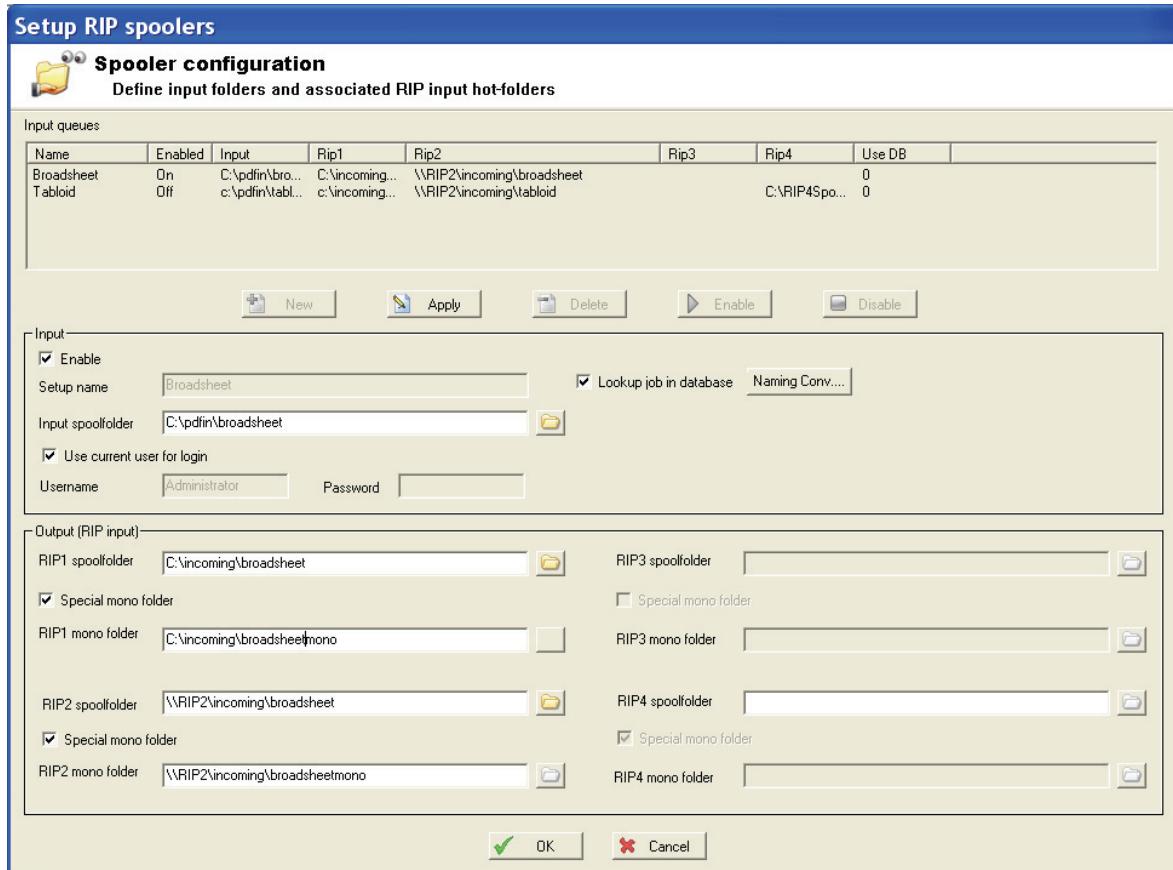
*Input queue configurations. Relationship between RipControl input folders and RIP input folders are established.*

*Input spool-folder*

Enter full network path to folder (mapped drive or UNC).

*Use current user for login*

Check this option when the same username/password combination is used for the local machine and the machine where the input folder is located

*Username/Password*

When not using the local account, enter user name and password to use for locking on to the machine having the input folder

*Lookup job in database*

Requires ControlCenter. Check this option and fill in the naming convention dialog (see next section) so that jobs can be recognized and looked up in the database. Lookup enables database-controlled prioritized ripping and auto-selection of color/mono page setups.

*RIPx spoolfolder*

Enter full network path to rip spool folder linked to page setup (mapped drive or UNC).

*Special mono folder*

Check this option in case a special RIP page setup is used for mono (greyscale) output.

*RIPx mono folder*

Enter full network path to rip spool folder linked to monochrome page setup (mapped drive or UNC).

## 3.5    Naming convention

Job naming convention is used for database-controlled operation. The job name recognition is required for job lookup in the ControlCenter production database. The naming convention is entered as a file mask using identifiers listed in the dialog.

Make sure to fill in the default values in case a certain identifier is not part of the filename.
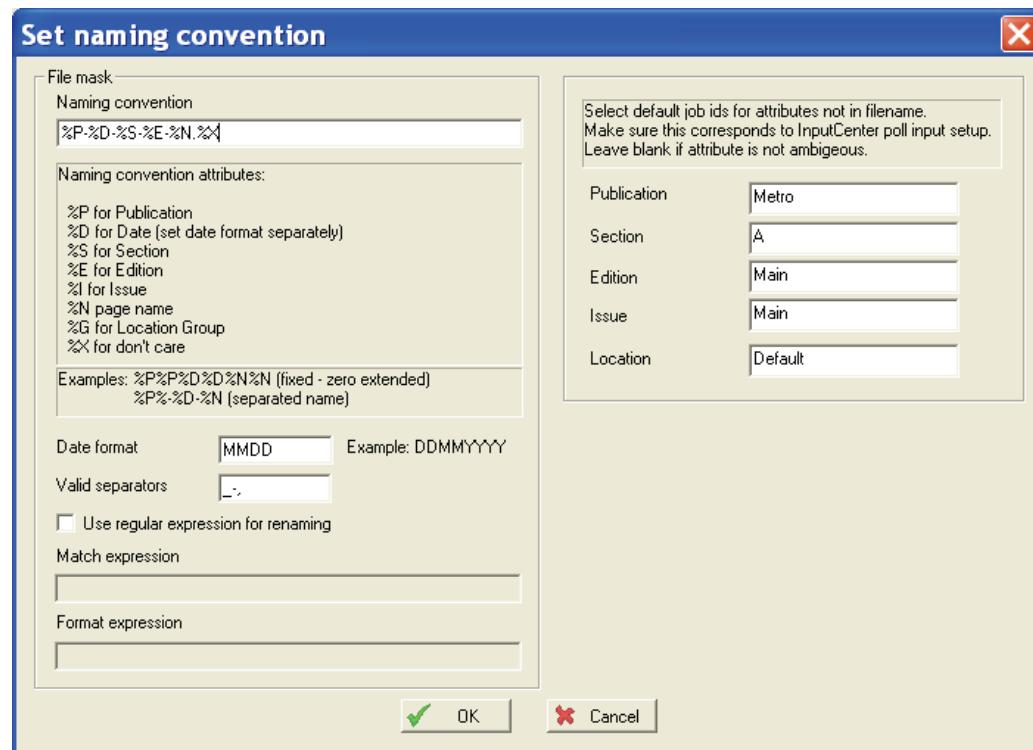
In case the name doesn't fit with the standard file naming scheme, a regular expression can be used to rename the file so it fits to the scheme. For regular expression syntax and usage, please refer to the *ControlCenter Enterprise User Manual* or the *ControlCenter Professional User Manual* (appendix A)

# 4   Common problems

**Problem:**

Jobs are ripping fine but there is no progress bars and the Current RIP job field is empty on RipControl.

**What to look for:**

This error has no impact on the load balancing performance. It is purely for visibility on the RipControl GUI. RipControl progress bar relies on a dedicated progress plug-in in the Harlequin RIP. Refer to the Readme.txt file found in the Progress-plugin folder on the installation CD.

**Problem:**

Jobs are not progressing on a particular RIP.

**What to look for:**

Beware that the setting "Maximum outstanding jobs on RIP" counts files in <u>all</u> defined folders for the RIP. So if the setting is 3 this means that if the accumulated number of waiting jobs is three then no more jobs will be sent to the RIP until the count reaches 2 or less. If for any reason one of the input spoolers on the RIP has been disabled or is hanging when files may be stuck.

Observe the lower left window to see if jobs are stuck in certain spool folders for long.

**Problem:**

Often the RIP is reporting "Offending command" or similar errors on jobs which is ok when processed manually using the RIP File menu.

**What to look for:**

Most probably the incoming jobs are moved too early from the RipControl input folder to the selected RIP. The file is not completely build up and will thus fail to RIP.

Adjust the stable-time to ensure the file has time enough to stabilize.

**Problem:**

Some inputs are not arriving as files but through published printers. How can this be fed to RipControl

**Solution:**

A tool called RedMon (Redirection Port Monitor) is included on the installation CD. The tool can be configured to re-direct data sent to a published printer to a file which can be polled by RipControl.

Read the installation instructions for RedMon for details on configuration.