

TZWorks® Microsoft Office Backstage (*bs*) Parser Users Guide



Abstract

bs is a standalone, command-line tool that parses the Microsoft Office 2016 Backstage artifacts. The Backstage artifact include entries of files and folders with their last modified timestamp. The results are displayed in a CSV type format where one record is displayed per line. This tool has binary versions that run in Windows, Linux and OS-X.

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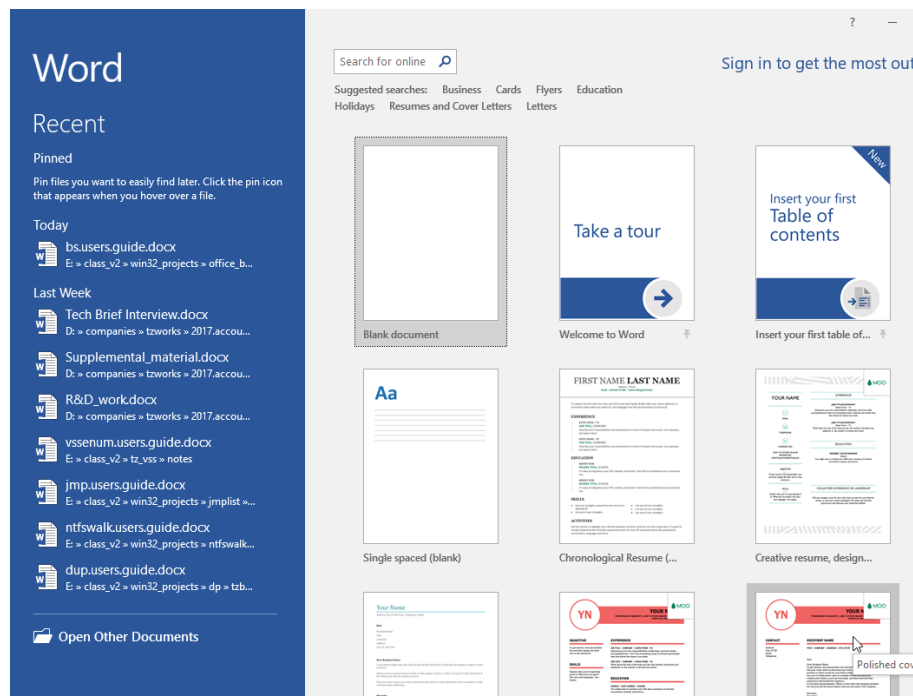
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Webpage: http://www.tzworks.com/prototype_page.php?proto_id=44

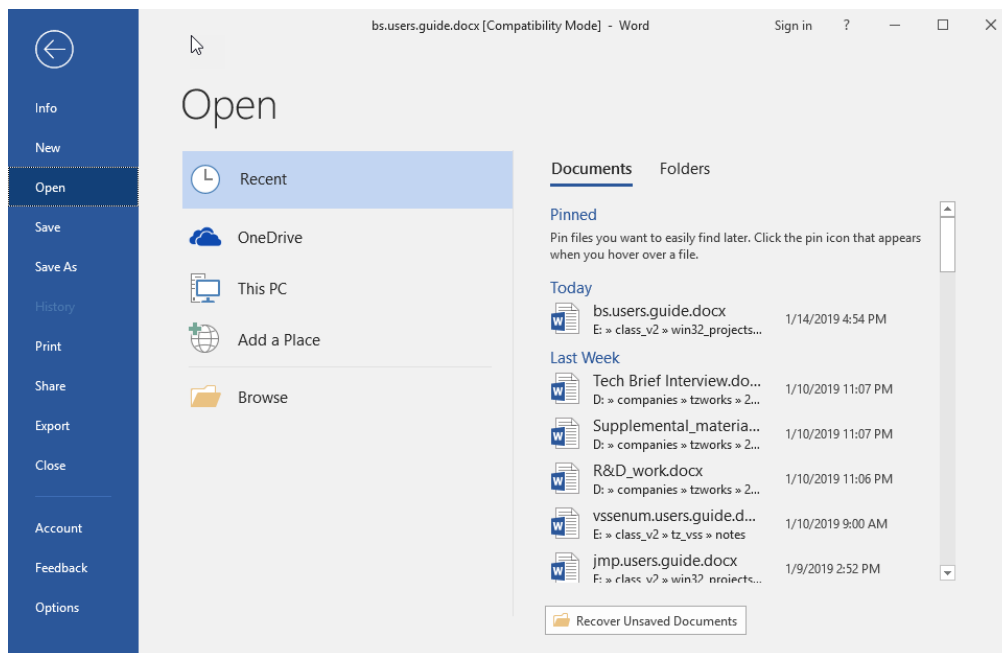
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1 Introduction

With the newer versions of Microsoft (MS) Office programs, when you first start Office you will be presented with the Backstage view. From this view, you can create a new document (using a pre-created template) or open an existing file. One can also see the most recently used files listed on the left side of the view.



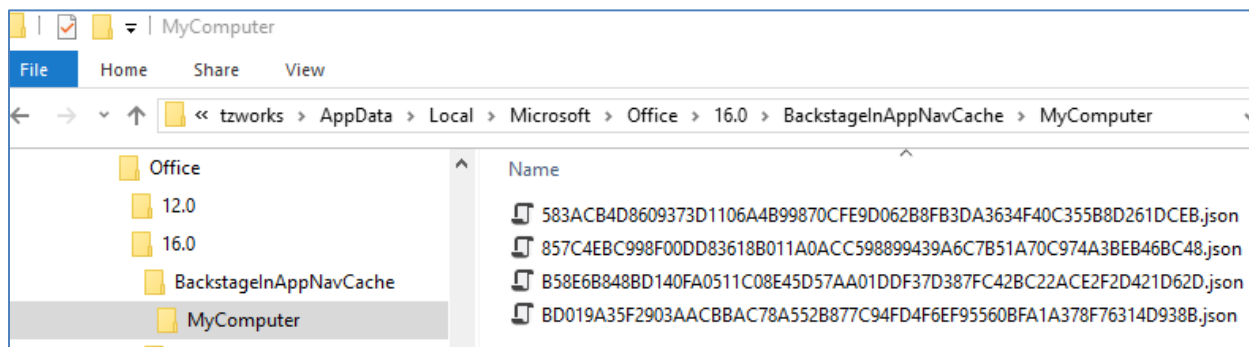
If you are currently viewing or editing a file, and you want to go back to the Backstage view, one just selects the **File** tab.



In order for MS Office to render the history data, it makes use of some persistent information stored on the computer. For MS Office 2016, this file history data is contained in a new set of files located in the *MyComputer* folder or other folders that designate remote shares.

C:\Users\kacct>AppData\Local\Microsoft\Office\16.0\BackstageInAppNavCache\MyComputer or other remote dir]

The files residing in this directory can be either delimited text or json formatted text. These files have long names that consist of a 64-character string. The string is actually a representation of a 32-byte hexadecimal hash which results from the computation of certain contents of the artifact file that relate to a primary directory. This, in turn, allows unique names files to be generated. Below is an example of a few of the JSON type files on one of our test computers.



When parsing the data in backstage files, of interest to the analyst is the data that contains references to file and folder paths (both local and remote), each timestamped with the last modified time. So, while the records identify files and folders used in the past, it doesn't necessarily mean they still exist on

the system. Therefore, this data can be good in identifying user activity in conjunction with certain files even after these same files may have been deleted or moved elsewhere.

2 Internals of the Artifact File

As mention earlier, the Backstage artifact data consists of text data. The older format has records where each field is delimited by the pipe character. The newer format has records that use the JSON (JavaScript Object Notation). The interesting fields that are populated for most records are the: *Url (folder)*, *Displayname (file)*, and *LastModified* timestamp. There are other fields, but they are not populated as often or not at all depending on your configuration, and include: *Author*, *ResourceID*, and a few others. Below are samples of the two formats encountered; the first screenshot shows records delimited by a pipe character and the second one is JSON. For the second one, we took the liberty of formatting the JSON output so it could be shown in this document; typically, the Backstage artifact renders JSON data without any CRLFs, and consequently, would look like a single very long line.

```
857C4EBC998F00DD83618B011A0ACC598899439A6C7B51A70C974A3BEB468C48.txt x
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90
1 C:\Users\tzworks\Documents
2 [Folders]
3 C:\Users\tzworks\Documents\Custom Office Templates|Custom Office Templates||-494661442:30713208
4 [Files]
5 C:\Users\tzworks\Documents\test1.docx|test1.docx||1275380190:30713210
6 C:\Users\tzworks\Documents\test2.xlsx|test2.xlsx||333394791:30713212
```

```
857C4EBC998F00DD83618B011A0ACC598899439A6C7B51A70C974A3BEB468C48.json" x
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 160 170 180 190
1 {
2   "LCID": 1033, "ContainerUrl": "C:\\Users\\tzworks\\Documents",
3   "Metadata": {"FolderCreationAllowed": true, "FileCreationAllowed": true},
4   "Folders": [
5     {"Url": "C:\\Users\\tzworks\\Documents\\Custom Office Templates", "DisplayName": "Custom Office Templates", "Author": "", "ResourceID": "", "LastModified": 13187719},
6     {"Url": "C:\\Users\\tzworks\\Documents\\My SlickEdit Config", "DisplayName": "My SlickEdit Config", "Author": "", "ResourceID": "", "LastModified": 13187665609115789},
7     {"Url": "C:\\Users\\tzworks\\Documents\\Snagit", "DisplayName": "Snagit", "Author": "", "ResourceID": "131876745733025761", "SharingLevelDescription": "None", "LastModified": 131876652477924550, "SharingLevelDescription": "None"},
8     {"Url": "C:\\Users\\tzworks\\Documents\\SweetScape", "DisplayName": "SweetScape", "Author": "", "ResourceID": "131876652477924550", "SharingLevelDescription": "None"},
9     {"Url": "C:\\Users\\tzworks\\Documents\\Visual Studio 2005", "DisplayName": "Visual Studio 2005", "Author": "", "ResourceID": "", "LastModified": 131876545425130769},
10    {"Url": "C:\\Users\\tzworks\\Documents\\Visual Studio 2008", "DisplayName": "Visual Studio 2008", "Author": "", "ResourceID": "", "LastModified": 131876533051737277},
11    {"Url": "C:\\Users\\tzworks\\Documents\\Visual Studio 2010", "DisplayName": "Visual Studio 2010", "Author": "", "ResourceID": "", "LastModified": 131904365508081938},
12    {"Url": "C:\\Users\\tzworks\\Documents\\Visual Studio 2017", "DisplayName": "Visual Studio 2017", "Author": "", "ResourceID": "", "LastModified": 131881591796003777},
13  ],
14  "Files": [
15    {"Url": "C:\\Users\\tzworks\\Documents\\Device Credential Guard.oxps", "DisplayName": "Device Credential Guard.oxps", "Author": "", "ResourceID": "", "RootResourceID": "", "LastModified": 131876673629937244, "SharingLevelDescription": "None"},
16    {"Url": "C:\\Users\\tzworks\\Documents\\device guard.pdf", "DisplayName": "device guard.pdf", "Author": "", "ResourceID": "131882513586726325", "SharingLevelDescription": "None"},
17    {"Url": "C:\\Users\\tzworks\\Documents\\offset", "DisplayName": "offset", "Author": "", "ResourceID": "131882513586726325", "SharingLevelDescription": "None"},
18  ]
19 }
```

3 How to Use *bs*

The screen shot below shows all the options available for this tool.

```
Administrator: Windows PowerShell

Usage

bs -file <backstage file> [options]

Basic options
-csv                    = output in CSV format (default)
-csv12t                = log2timeline output
-bodyfile              = sleuthkit output

Additional options
-csv_separator "|"     = use a pipe char for csv separator
-dateformat mm/dd/yyyy = "yyyy-mm-dd" is the default
-timeformat hh:mm:ss.xxxxxx = "hh:mm:ss.xxx" is the default
-no_whitespace         = remove whitespace between csv delimiter
-pipe                  = pipe files into tool for processing
-quiet                 = no progress shown

Usage Examples (piping files in)
dir <folder> /b /s /a | bs -pipe = parse many files
bs -enumdir <folder> -num_subdirs <#> [options]

Experimental options
bs -compute_name       = compute the name using file internals
```

The most basic option is to parse an individual file. One does this by using the **-file <argument>** option. This takes the artifact path/file as an argument. The tool can sense, based on the file contents, whether the data is pipe delimited text or JSON formatted text so no extra parameters are required to be passed in by the user to process either the older or newer formatted files. Once the tool determines the format, the data is parsed into individual records. Below is an example of the parsed data in a report format.

```
License #1d38e7cc14a3070 is authenticated for business use and registered to TZWorks LLC
run time: 01/15/2019 02:55:37 [UTC]; Host: DESKTOP-M8B0QQP; MachineInfo: Windows;10.0.workstation;10.0.1;64
"cmdline: bs64 -file e:\testcase\BackstageInAppNavCache\json.format\win10\857C4EBC998F00DD83618B011A0ACC598899439A6C7B51A70C974A38EB46BC48.j
```

LastModify UTC (entry)	type	DisplayName	Url	Author	Resourc
11/26/2018 15:28:29.938	Folder	Custom Office Templates	C:\Users\tzworks\Documents\Custom Office Templates		
11/26/2018 00:26:49.115	Folder	My SlickEdit Config	C:\Users\tzworks\Documents\My SlickEdit Config		
11/26/2018 02:56:13.302	Folder	Snagit	C:\Users\tzworks\Documents\Snagit		
11/26/2018 00:20:47.792	Folder	SweetScape	C:\Users\tzworks\Documents\SweetScape		
11/25/2018 21:22:22.513	Folder	Visual Studio 2005	C:\Users\tzworks\Documents\Visual Studio 2005		
11/25/2018 21:01:45.173	Folder	Visual Studio 2008	C:\Users\tzworks\Documents\Visual Studio 2008		
12/28/2018 02:09:10.808	Folder	Visual Studio 2010	C:\Users\tzworks\Documents\Visual Studio 2010		
12/01/2018 17:32:59.600	Folder	Visual Studio 2017	C:\Users\tzworks\Documents\Visual Studio 2017		
11/26/2018 00:52:12.312	File	Device Credential Guard.oxps	C:\Users\tzworks\Documents\Device Credential Guard.oxps		
11/26/2018 00:56:02.993	File	device guard.pdf	C:\Users\tzworks\Documents\device guard.pdf		
12/02/2018 19:09:18.672	File	offset	C:\Users\tzworks\Documents\offset		

Shown above is the default output, which uses a CSV variant that separates fields with pipe delimiters. One can specify other delimiters as well, by using the **-csv_separator <delimiter arg>**. The delimiter argument can either be one of 3 characters: *comma*, *pipe* or *tab*. One can also output the parsed data in the common *Log2Timeline* format (**-csv12t**), if desiring to merge this artifact data with other artifacts to create a timeline of activities.

If desiring to parse many files contained in a folder, one can use the **-pipe** option to process an entire folder and child subfolders in one session. Since the tool can sense between the different artifact internal formats, one can mix and match older and newer formatted files during this process. An example on how to use the **-pipe** option is shown in the command-line menu output subtitled “Usage Examples” that is shown above.

If one cannot use the **-pipe** option, one can use the experimental **-enumdir** option, which has similar functionality with more control. The **-enumdir** option takes as its parameter the folder to start with. It also allows one to specify the number of subdirectories to evaluate using the **-num_subdirs <#>** sub-option.

The last option worth mentioning is an experimental option that computes the name of the artifact file by using certain contents of the Backstage file. One invokes this via the **-compute_name** switch. This can be used with either the **-file <arg>** option or the **-pipe** option. This is useful to see if the contents (or the name) of the file have changed either via corruption or if done intentionally.

4 Available Options

Option	Description
-file	Specifies which Backstage file to act on. The format is: -file <backstage file to parse>
-csv	Outputs the data fields delimited by commas. Since filenames can have commas, to ensure the fields are uniquely separated, any commas in the filenames get converted to spaces.
-csvl2t	Outputs the data fields in accordance with the log2timeline format.
-bodyfile	Outputs the data fields in accordance with the 'body-file' version3 specified in the SleuthKit. The date/timestamp outputted to the body-file is in terms of UTC. So if using the body-file in conjunction with the mactime.pl utility, one needs to set the environment variable TZ=UTC.
-pipe	Used to pipe files into the tool via STDIN (standard input). Each file passed in is parsed in sequence.
-enumdir	Experimental. Used to process files within a folder and/or subfolders. Each file is parsed in sequence. The syntax is -enumdir <folder> -num_subdirs <#> .
-filter	Filters data passed in via STDIN via the -pipe or -enumdir options. The syntax is -filter <"*.ext *partialname* ..."> . The wildcard character '*' is restricted to either before the name or after the name.
-no_whitespace	Used in conjunction with -csv option to remove any whitespace between the field value and the CSV separator.
-csv_separator	Used in conjunction with the -csv option to change the CSV separator from the default comma to something else. Syntax is -csv_separator "<char>" to change

	the CSV separator to the pipe character. To use the tab as a separator, one can use the <i>-csv_separator "tab"</i> OR <i>-csv_separator "\t"</i> options.
<i>-dateformat</i>	Output the date using the specified format. Default behavior is <i>-dateformat "yyyy-mm-dd"</i> . Using this option allows one to adjust the format to mm/dd/yy, dd/mm/yy, etc. The restriction with this option is the forward slash (/) or dash (-) symbol needs to separate month, day and year and the month is in digit (1-12) form versus abbreviated name form.
<i>-timeformat</i>	Output the time using the specified format. Default behavior is <i>-timeformat "hh:mm:ss.xxx"</i> One can adjust the format to microseconds, via <i>"hh:mm:ss.xxxxxx"</i> or nanoseconds, via <i>"hh:mm:ss.xxxxxxxxxx"</i> , or no fractional seconds, via <i>"hh:mm:ss"</i> . The restrictions with this option is a colon (:) symbol needs to separate hours, minutes and seconds, a period (.) symbol needs to separate the seconds and fractional seconds, and the repeating symbol 'x' is used to represent number of fractional seconds.
<i>-quiet</i>	Show no progress during the parsing operation.
<i>-compute_name</i>	Computes the name of the Backstage file by looking at the file internals
<i>-utf8_bom</i>	All output is in Unicode UTF-8 format. If desired, one can prefix an UTF-8 <i>byte order mark</i> to the output using this option.

5 Authentication and the License File

This tool has authentication built into the binary. The primary authentication mechanism is the digital X509 code signing certificate embedded into the binary (Windows and macOS).

The other mechanism is the runtime authentication, which applies to all the versions of the tools (Windows, Linux and macOS). The runtime authentication ensures that the tool has a valid license. The license needs to be in the same directory of the tool for it to authenticate. Furthermore, any modification to the license, either to its name or contents, will invalidate the license.

6 References

1. G-C Partners Daily Blog #510, 18 Oct 2018. Office 2016 Backstage Artifacts.
2. <https://blogs.technet.microsoft.com/office2010/2009/07/15/microsoft-office-backstage-part-1-backstory/>
3. <https://blogs.technet.microsoft.com/office2010/2009/08/11/microsoft-office-backstage-part-3-the-info-tab/>