

Improving productivity for IBM eServer iSeries traditional applications

Using WebSphere Remote System Explorer

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Abstract

Remote System Explorer (RSE), a perspective within IBM® WebSphere® Development Studio Client, provides a visual interface for the developer. It is designed to give access to all of the resources required to develop and maintain a traditional green-screen application on a desktop. As such, developers can manage IBM® iSeries™ resources, as well as edit, maintain, compile, and debug code. This white paper focuses on introducing RSE's resource management capabilities, as well as editing and verification functions. Thus, this paper serves as an overview of the tool and its ability to deliver increased productivity to WebSphere application developers on the iSeries family.

Introduction

When modernizing an application, one of the first and most important decisions to make is which tools are best suited for the task.

Ideally, the tools will address most, if not all of the stages of the modernizing process. This greatly enhances productivity by giving a common user experience to each of the developer's activities, and it removes the frustrations involved in learning several tool interfaces to address different requirements.

IBM WebSphere Development Studio Client has been designed to address these concerns, and it offers an integrated development environment (IDE) that can be used to build the various types of applications presented in the IBM eServer™ iSeries Developer Roadmap. This paper addresses the first step in the modernizing process by discussing how the Remote System Explorer (RSE), a perspective within WebSphere Development Studio Client, provides a better and more productive tool for creating and maintaining traditional green-screen applications.

WebSphere Development Studio Client (IBM product number 5722-WDS) is composed of two parts. One part is installed on the iSeries system, and the other is installed on the developer's workstation. This paper discusses the workstation portion of the tool.

Perspectives and views

As just mentioned, WebSphere Development Studio Client is composed of a number of perspectives, each designed to address a particular type of development effort by delivering access to the resources required for that task. It contains an RSE perspective that provides a visual interface to a more productive development environment for building traditional, green-screen applications.

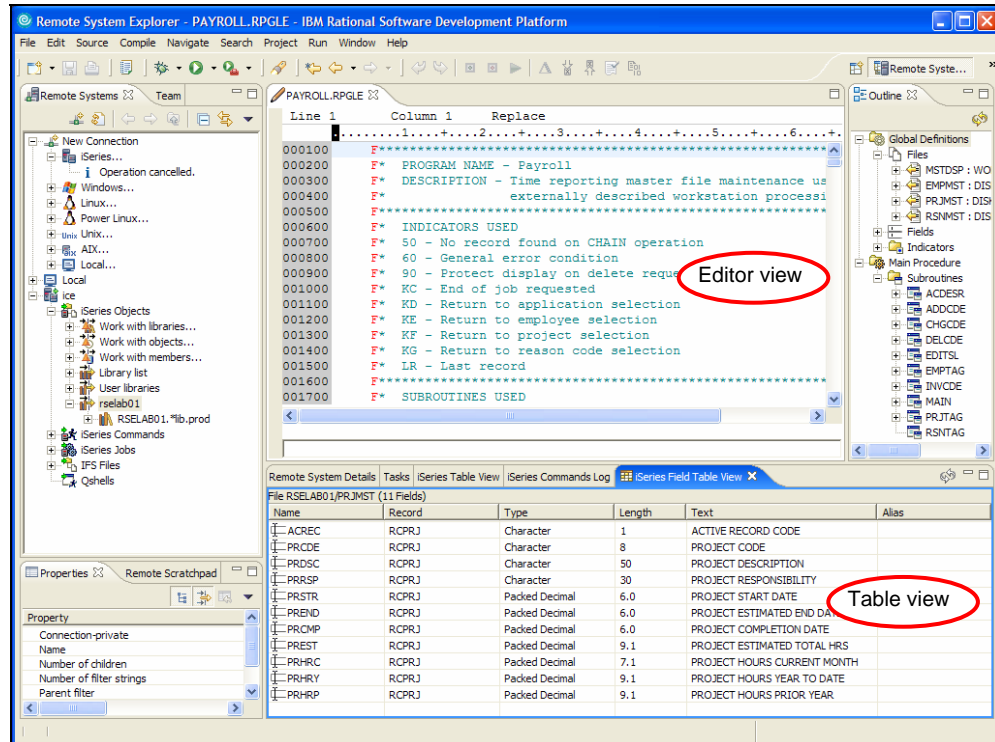


Figure 1: Default RSE perspective

The default perspective for RSE, shown in Figure 1, contains several windows (called views). A view displays a resource and allows the developer to manage and manipulate that resource. The **Editor** view (top center of the screen capture in Figure 1) allows the developer to manipulate the source code. The **Table** view (bottom of the screen capture) shows the characteristics of the fields within a file. A perspective, which is essentially a collection of views, then defines the collection and the actions that are typically required for a particular environment. These perspectives can be modified, allowing the developer to include or exclude views as needed.

The RSE perspective has many functions to manage development resources, as well as a powerful LPEX (live parsing and extensible) editor. The following is a brief review of some of these features and how they are used together to deliver the integrated development environment (IDE).

Managing resources

RSE provides a number of tools that deliver a structured approach to managing resources. One key element of the Remote System view for the developer is subsystems (not to be confused with iSeries subsystems).

Subsystems

- The **Remote Systems** view (see screen capture in Figure 2) shows the following subsystems for various functions:
- iSeries objects
- iSeries commands
- iSeries jobs
- IFS files
- Qshells

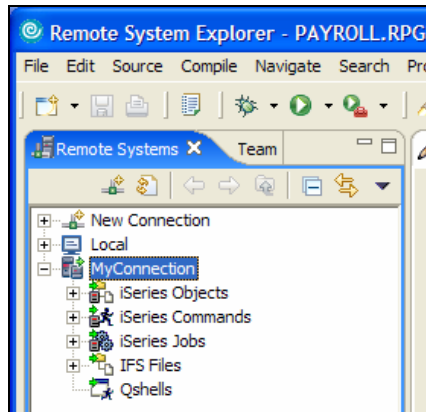


Figure 2: Remote Systems view

iSeries objects

With this subsystem, the developer can create, copy, rename, delete, and retrieve information about objects, as well as compile and execute programs. Also, filters can be created for viewing specific objects. This is very similar to the iSeries **Work with libraries using Programming Development Manager (WRKLIBPDM)** CL command, except that filters can be saved with custom names and reused later. The developer can also drag-and-drop or cut-and-paste objects, subject to iSeries system rules, greatly reducing the time required to manipulate them.

iSeries commands

This subsystem is used for executing iSeries commands that have been defined by the developer. It also allows for the manipulation of libraries, files, members, and library lists. The example in Figure 3 shows the options available within the subsystem.

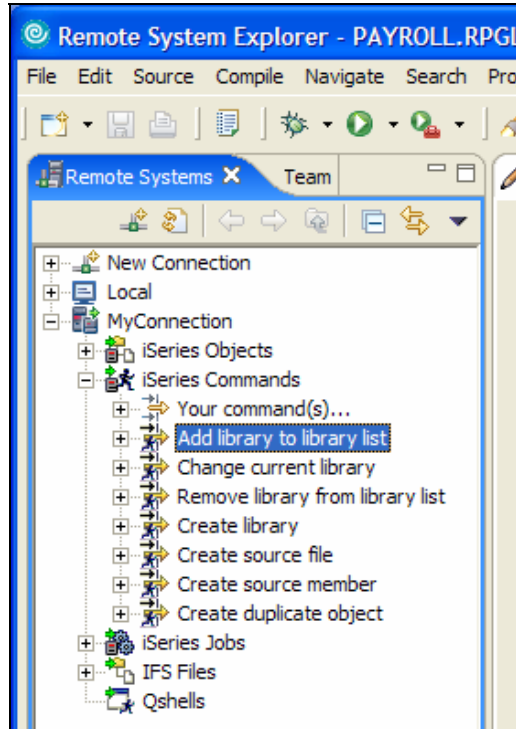


Figure 3: Subsystem options

Wizards are provided for each operation, as shown in Figure 4, for the iSeries **Create Library (CRTLIB)** CL command.

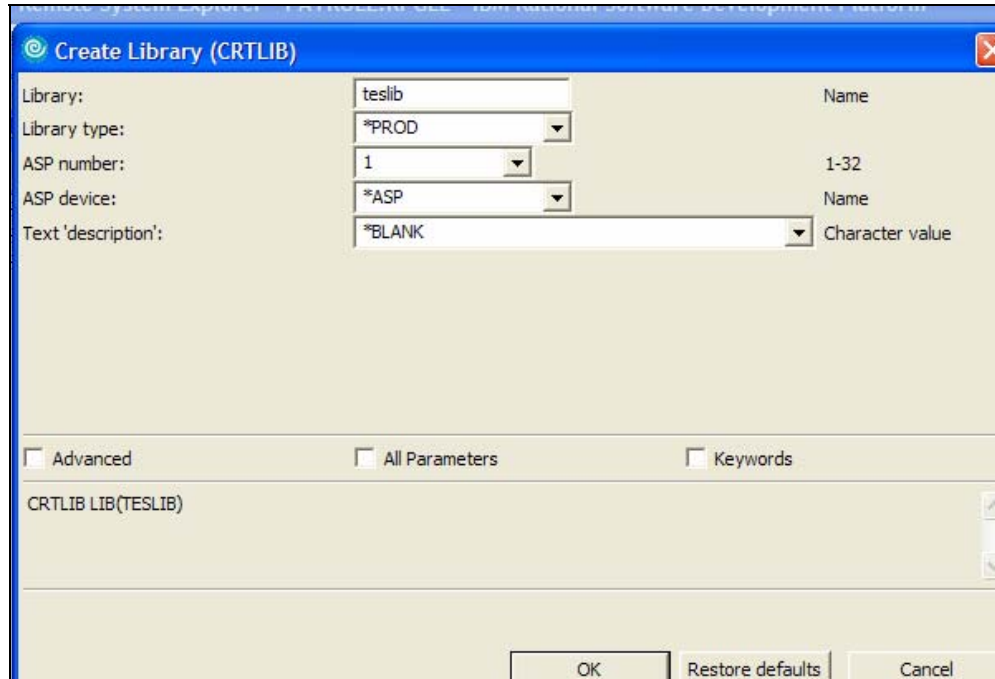


Figure 4: The Create Library (CRTLIB) CL command

iSeries jobs

This subsystem allows the developer to manage jobs on the iSeries system. These actions include the ability to hold, end, and debug jobs, as well as view logs.

IFS files

This subsystem allows for the manipulation of the iSeries integrated file system (IFS). The developer can view, create, delete, move, rename, and open files and folders. The developer can also see properties. All of these functions, as shown in Figure 5, are accomplished with mouse actions as opposed to typing.

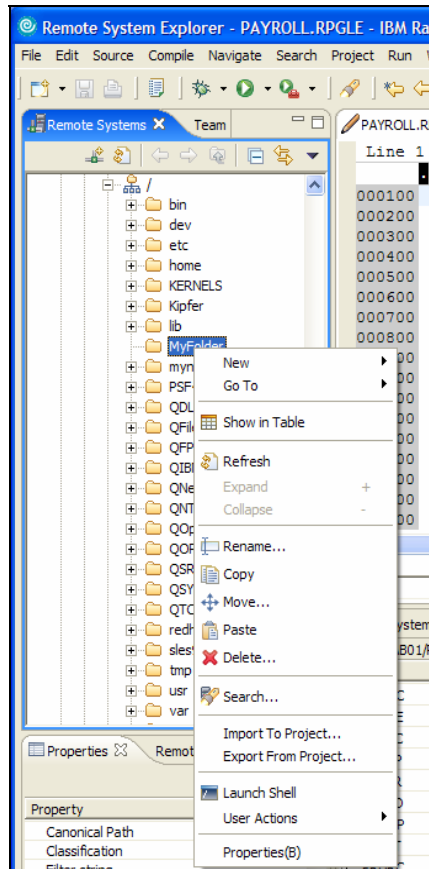


Figure 5: IFS mouse actions

Editing and verifying the source code

RSE is extremely efficient for developing and maintaining application code. In this case, a number of views and actions work together. Two of the common views are the **Outline** view and the **LPEX Editor** view.

Outline view

After the application program has been opened with the LPEX editor, and the outline view is refreshed, the information will be displayed as illustrated in Figure 6.

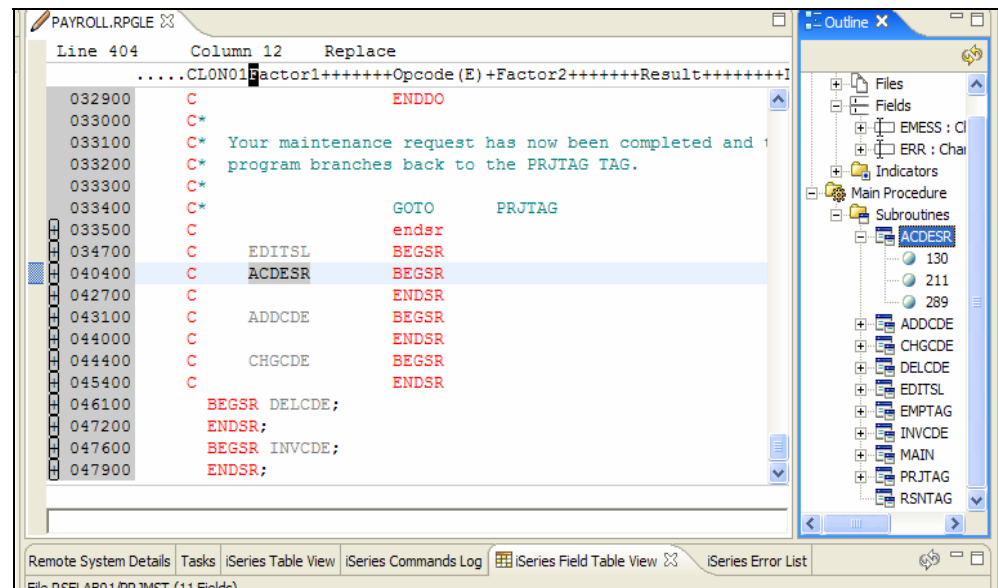


Figure 6: The outline view

The **Outline** view displays the names of all files, fields, indicators, and subroutines that are used in the program. They are displayed in a tree structure, which, when expanded as shown in Figure 6, will also indicate the location where the item is defined and list every line of code that references it. The **Subroutines** tree structure (shown in the right panel of the screen capture in Figure 6) has been expanded to display the name of all subroutines that are used in the program. The structure for the **ACDESCR** subroutine has also been expanded to display every line of code where it (the ACDESCR subroutine) is referenced. If the developer clicks any of these line numbers, the editor positions the cursor to that line of code. In Figure 6, the developer clicked **ACDESCR** in the outline view, and the cursor is automatically positioned at the line of code where ACDESCR is defined in the LPEX editor under the **PAYROLL** tab.

Compared to the typical search features that are currently available, this is a simple yet powerful productivity aid.

LPEX Editor view

Remote System Explorer (RSE) contains the Remote Systems LPEX editor for editing source code directly in the workbench. The interface provides right-click actions for compiling and running programs. With the many functions available with this LPEX Editor, the developer can perform the following operations:

- Cut, copy, and paste operations.
- Block mark lines, characters, or rectangles with copy, move, and delete operations.
- Find and replace character strings quickly and easily.
- Undo and redo operations.
- Highlight various language constructs using different colors and fonts.
- Show the purpose of each column using a source entry utility (SEU)-like format line ruler that is automatically updated to reflect current specifications.
- Utilize SEU-like source line prompting for RPG and DDS source members.
- Employ sequence numbers that allow SEU-style commands in the prefix area.
- Tab between columns for column-sensitive languages.
- Automatically convert to uppercase for languages that expect it.
- Use commands to simplify text insertions and deletions for column-sensitive languages.
- Display specific source member content in the editor using filtered views.
- Display control structures for columnar languages.
- View field details of any database, workstation, or printer files referenced in the source member using a **show fields** function.
- Verify the source code.
- Receive online language reference help.
- Check the syntax for RPG, COBOL, or CL.

In addition, the editor can be customized to meet the developer's requirements.

PAYROLL example

Some of the more pertinent functions that impact the developer's productivity and demonstrate the ease-of-use of the LPEX editor can be demonstrated through a sample RPG program (PAYROLL). Because PAYROLL contains several errors, it will be easy to illustrate LPEX editing features, such as its ability to integrate with the other views, to provide a complete development environment.

In Figure 7, the developer has clicked the program name in the **Remote Systems** view, and the program has been opened and displayed in the **PAYROLL** tab in the **Editor** view. The **Outline** view has been refreshed and all the files and fields have been displayed. In the **PAYROLL** tab of the **Editor** view, the SEU commands can be used for editing by the block copy designated by CC in the sequence number. Hence there are no new commands to learn. Also, the highlighted line contains the **MOVE** op code. The prompt key (F4) was pressed, and in the bottom panel, the **iSeries Source Prompter** tab displays the prompt required for this op code.

Online manuals

In addition, if the help key (F1) is pressed, the RPG manual will open and display in a separate window (see Figure 7) to explain the **MOVE** op code. This removes the need to search printed manuals.

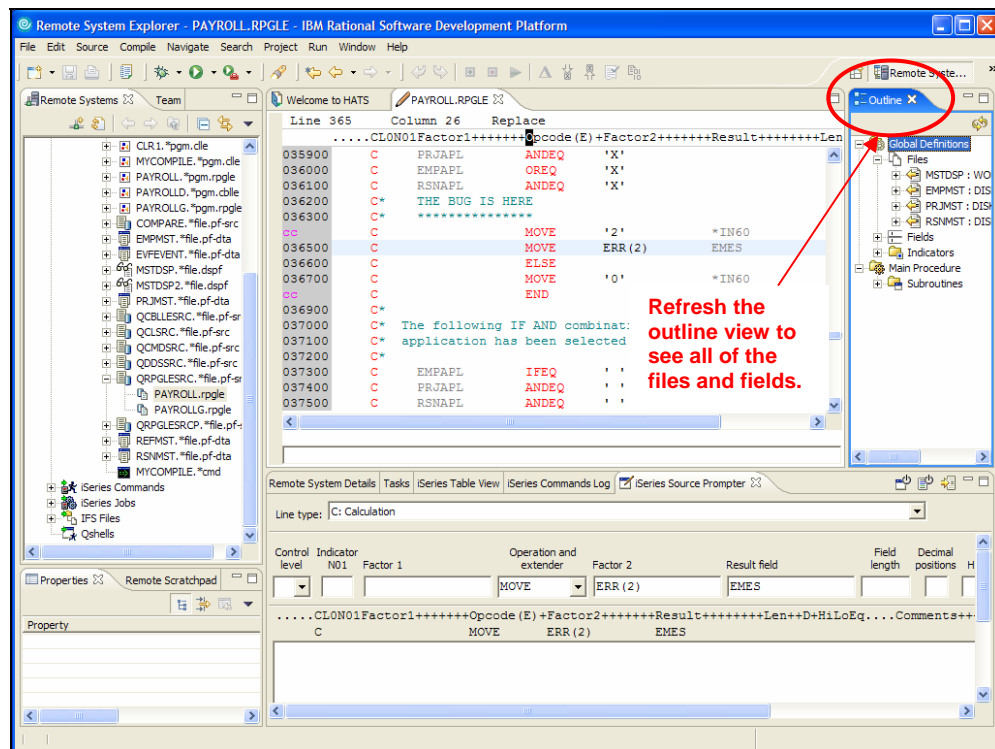


Figure 7: Remote Systems view and options

Filter views

Figure 8 shows what occurs if the developer right-clicks the **PAYROLL** tab window. The resulting pop-up menu offers a number of actions, such as **Prompt** and **Syntax Check Line**. In particular, this menu supplies **Filter view**, which as its name implies, allows the developer to filter the view by date, code, or whatever the situation requires. In this case, **Subroutines** was chosen.

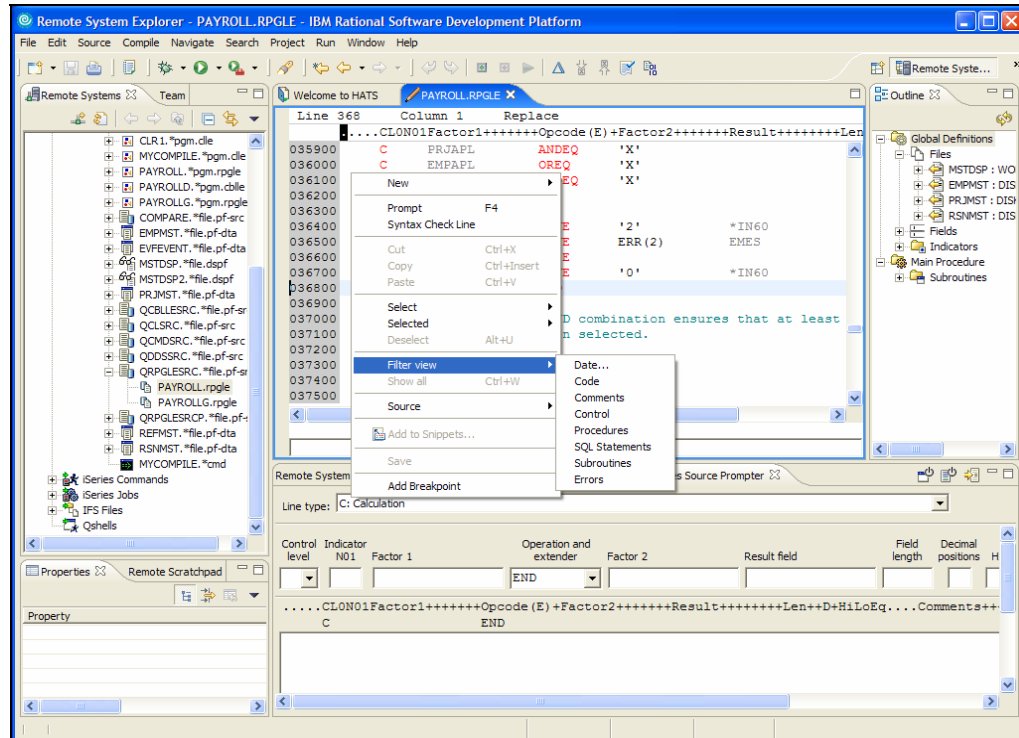


Figure 8: PAYROLL tab options

Subroutine views

Once the **Subroutine** folder is chosen (under the **Main Procedure** folder), the view changes and only the subroutines are displayed (one line for each). The complete subroutine can be displayed by clicking the **+** sign next to the folder. Refer to the illustration below in Figure 9 for an example.

The screenshot shows the IBM Rational Software Development Platform interface. The main window displays a code editor for a subroutine named 'PAYROLL.RPGLE'. The editor shows a list of subroutines with the following columns: Line, Code, Name, and Indicator. The subroutines listed are:

Line	Code	Name	Indicator
005200	C	MAIN	BEGSR
010200	C		endsr
011000	C	RSNTAG	BEGSR
017600	C		ENDsr
018300	C	EMPTAG	BEGSR
025700	C		ENDSR
026400	C	PRJTAG	begsr
026500	C	DOU	*INRC
026600	C	MOVE	'0' *IN60
026700	C	MOVE	*BLANKS EMESS
026800	C	MOVE	*BLANKS PRCDCE
026900	C	MOVE	*BLANKS ACODE
027000	C	DOU	not *IN60
027100	C	MOVE	*BLANKS PRDSC
027200	C	MOVE	*BLANKS PRRSP
027300	C	2-ADD	0 PRSTR

Below the code editor, there is a table showing error messages for various subroutines:

ID	Message	Sev...	Line	Location	Connection
RNF5178	ENDSR operation is missing for subroutine EDITS1; ENDS...		30	1	RSELAB01/QRPGLESRC(P... MyConnection
RNF7089	RPG provides Separate-Indicator area for file MSTDSP.		0	27	RSELAB01/QRPGLESRC(P... MyConnection
RNF7031	The name or indicator *IN03 is not referenced.		0	1	RSELAB01/QRPGLESRC(P... MyConnection
RNF7031	The name or indicator *IN04 is not referenced.		0	1	RSELAB01/QRPGLESRC(P... MyConnection
RNF7031	The name or indicator *IN05 is not referenced.		0	1	RSELAB01/QRPGLESRC(P... MyConnection
RNF7031	The name or indicator *IN06 is not referenced.		0	1	RSELAB01/QRPGLESRC(P... MyConnection
RNF7031	The name or indicator *IN07 is not referenced.		0	1	RSELAB01/QRPGLESRC(P... MyConnection

Figure 9: Subroutine tab views

Source verification

One of the most powerful features in RSE is the ability to verify source code on the developer's workstation. In the example shown in Figure 10, the **PAYROLL** program was verified, and the results are displayed below.

A new tab in the bottom panel, called **iSeries error list**, is opened and all the compile time errors are listed there. In Figure 10, the RNF7030 error has been double-clicked. The cursor is then positioned at the line of code in error in the **PAYROLL** tab, and the error message text is displayed.

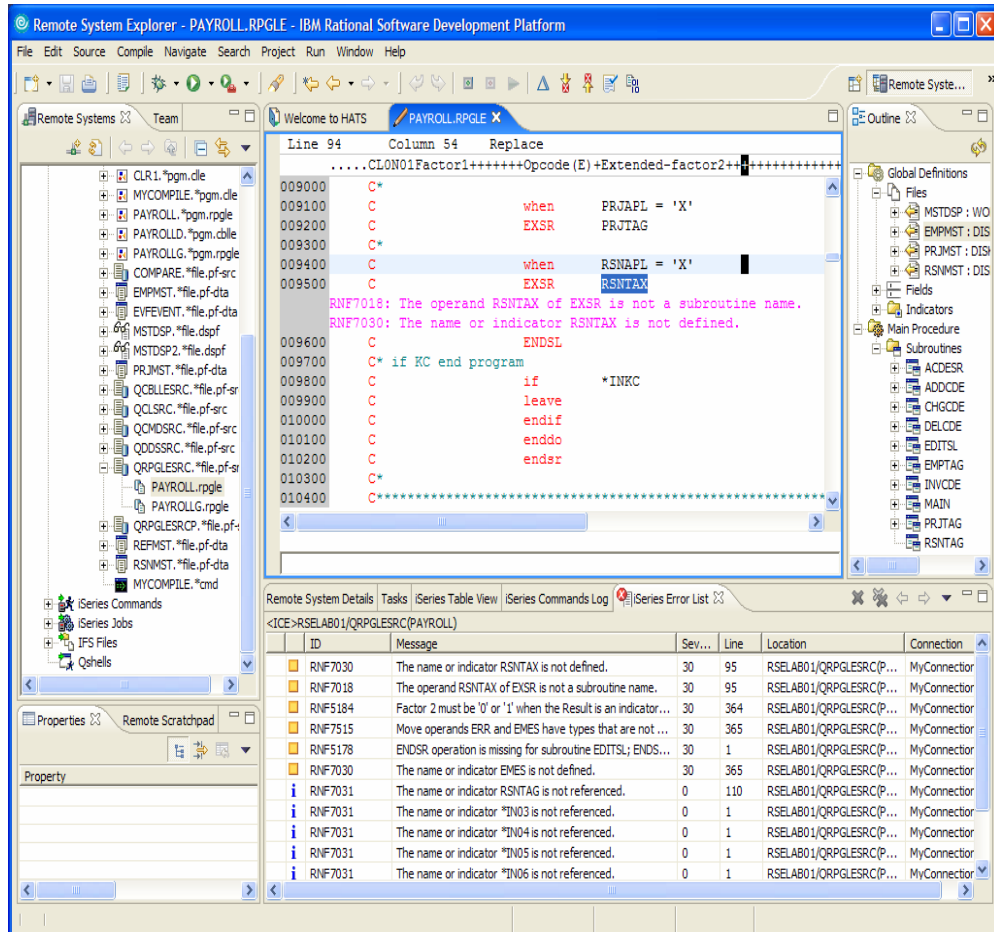


Figure 10: PAYROLL program verified and the iSeries error list

Error correction

Because the subroutine name is incorrect in this instance, the developer will position the cursor on the field and press **CTRL + spacebar**. The editor will then display all the subroutines as shown in Figure 11. The developer then clicks the correct name to place it in the source code. This is much simpler than the existing process of displaying the spool file, finding the error number and line number, and then the actual line of code.

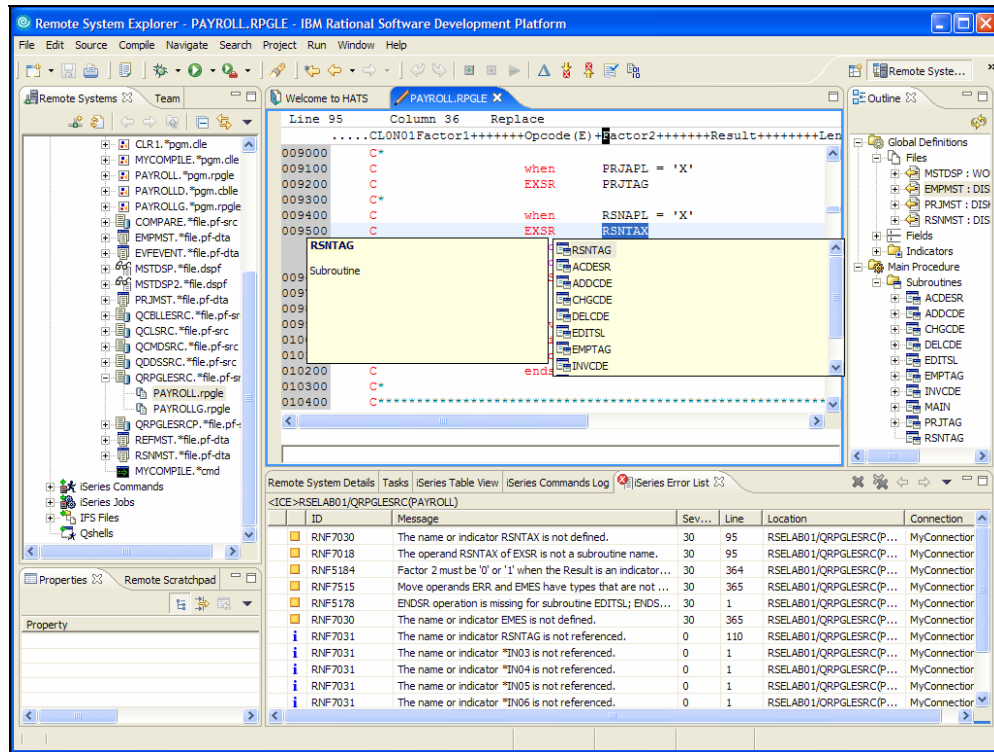


Figure 11: Displaying subroutines

Compiling the program

Once all the errors have been corrected, the developer can click the program name to compile it. This is demonstrated in the following example (Figure 12):

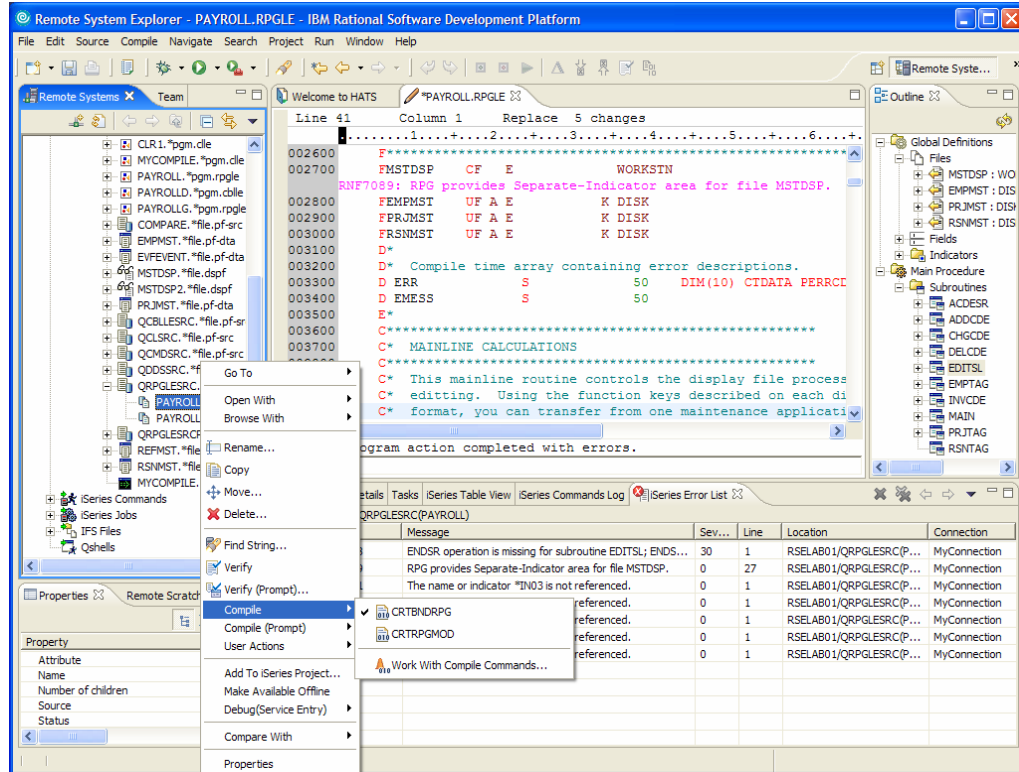


Figure 12: Compiling the program

Summary

Remote System Explorer (RSE), provided with WebSphere Development Studio Client, uses many familiar commands to help reduce its learning curve, while also offering powerful new functions with a visual interface. The integrated development environment allows further advantages.

Additional functions, such as the **Outline** tab view and the **Verify** function, combined with the LPEX editor, enhance the developer's productivity by greatly reducing the number of steps required to complete a task.

Although RSE takes some discipline to learn, after the initial learning period, developers are much more productive than in traditional programming environments. Programmers find there is often a temptation to rely on the older tools with which they are already familiar. If this temptation is resisted, however, developers will soon discover increased productivity and simplified maintenance for traditional applications. In addition, when developers have mastered WebSphere Development Studio Client and RSE they can use the same tool with the other modernizing technologies on the roadmap such as IBM WebFacing for iSeries, WebSphere Host Access Transformation Services (HATS), Java™, and WebSphere Portal development.

Resources

For more information regarding Remote System Explorer, eServer, and the eServer i5 and iSeries family of computers, refer to the following links.

- WebSphere Development Studio Client for iSeries
ibm.com/software/awdtools/wdt400
- **Training courses**
 - Web-based training course for WebSphere Development Studio Client
ibm.com/developerworks/websphere/library/tutorials/dl/sw738/
- **IBM Redbooks™** (ibm.com/redbooks)
 - WebSphere Development Studio Client for iSeries V5.1.2 (SG24-6961)
- IBM eServer i5 Information Center
<http://publib.boulder.ibm.com/infocenter/iseri5/v5r3/ic2924/index.htm>
- IBM eServer p5 Information Center
<http://publib.boulder.ibm.com/infocenter/pseries/index.jsp>
- IBM Publications Center
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Garry is a consulting IT specialist working in the Solutions Enablement group, Canada. He has more than 30 years experience in midrange systems with IBM. During that period, he has worked in traditional application development, client/server applications, data warehousing, application modernization, iSeries performance, and IBM DB2® Universal Database™ for iSeries.

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