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Subject: Re: IDL and data acquisition

Posted by [rpina](#) on Tue, 30 Dec 1997 08:00:00 GMT

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What operating system are you using on your PC? If you are using DOS/Windows 3.1 then you can use the INP/INPW functions to read from the serial port and the OUTP /OUTPW procedures to write to the serial port. However, I suspect that you are probably using Windows NT. In that case, you are indeed correct that you must use a DLL and the CALL\_EXTERNAL function. Under Windows NT, all hardware resources (which includes serial ports) are protected by the operating system. This means that any process which would like to use a hardware resource must request access to the resource from the operating system--the old INP/OUTP routines accessed the I/O port directly (in fact using the HEX address of the port explicitly in the function call). Thus, under NT, accessing the port is multi-step process. First, you must request access to the port from the operating system. If the port is free, the operating system will give you access to the port. Then, you can read and write to the port. Finally, when finished, you must release the port so other processes may use the port if necessary.

I am by no means a windows programmer, but I have written a DLL which allows access to the serial ports. For each of the DLL functions, I have a corresponding IDL function/procedure to make access to the serial port essentially transparent in terms of usage of the CALL\_EXTERNAL functions and the packaging of the arguments required by the various DLL functions. The DLL was written and compiled using a Borland C compiler. I would be more than happy to make the source code available to anyone who wants it.

Cheers,

Robert K. Pina

In article <349EA071.BD71BAFB@mpe-garching.mpg.de>,

Michael Sterzik <sterzik@mpe-garching.mpg.de> wrote:

>  
> Has anyone experience in reading/writing to the serial port of an PC  
> under IDL?  
> I guess one has to use DLLs and call\_external.  
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