
Subject: Re: Q: write to clipboard
Posted by [menakkis](#) on Thu, 22 Oct 1998 07:00:00 GMT
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Theo Brauers <Th.Brauers@fz-juelich.de> wrote:
> I am looking for simple procedures to write into and
> read from the (WinNT) clipboard directly from IDL.
> like:
> WRITE_CLIPBOARD, ['first line', '2nd']
> a=READ_CLIPBOARD()

This can get quite complex, although maybe not if you only want to work with strings. Bear with me...

The main problem with clipboard support in IDL, as I see it, is that you really need to have access to the main, native Windows message loop to do it properly. Windows does support a few standard clipboard formats which it knows how to throw away by itself, and if you can go with these then you could come right in IDL, otherwise you're stuck. (I don't think that you can get at the Windows message loop in IDL.) I'll try to explain this a bit more...

The clipboard is largely about **sharing** multiple data formats. If you have a look at what an application like MS Excel sticks onto the clipboard when you copy a bunch of cells, you'll notice maybe a couple of dozen formats, even pictures of the cells! Included are the standard Windows formats (like straight text, bitmap and metafile), but there are numerous other "private", often more useful formats (like "Csv"). The idea is that Excel can dish out some format to suit just about any application that can paste from the clipboard. The problem with the private formats is that Windows won't chuck them away. All formats use memory. If you have stuck some private formats on the clipboard and another application comes along wanting to copy to the clipboard, Windows expects to be able to send you a message saying: "Hey! Clear your trash off the clipboard!" If your app doesn't respond appropriately (or hasn't registered these formats properly) then things can go sick, and the best-case scenario is that memory leaks away. There are some other kinds of clipboard messages too.

Sorry to bend your ear like this, but I wanted to flesh out the limitations. Now the good part: If you can make do with copying only the standard formats then you should be OK. These include straight text, bitmap, metafile, and even SYLK, I believe. (Check out the Win32 documentation for a full list.) You can of course paste in anything that you know how to deal with.

I have some basic Copy support in:
<ftp://demsyd.syd.dem.csiro.au/pub/mmtg/idl/winclip.zip>
Included somewhere in this assortment are routines that copy a bitmap or an array of strings to the clipboard. I haven't been inclined to do a "paste", but - tell you what - if you suggest a simple paste operation that you'd like

(e.g., paste in a string array), I might code one up.

Peter Mason

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