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Subject: Re: IDL5.3 and documentation

Posted by [Paul van Delst](#) on Mon, 24 May 1999 07:00:00 GMT

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robert.m.candey.1@gssc.nasa.gov wrote:

> In article <374224BB.CD038933@wellesley.edu>, rfrench@mediaone.net wrote:

>

>> With his permission, I am posting RSI's Mark Goosman's answer to some

>> questions I posted on this newsgroup recently. He also provided the

>> following information about the next release of IDL:

>>

>> IDL 5.3 is scheduled for October 99.

>>

>> Mark's message:

<snip>

>> Prior to the IDL 5.2 release, we did make an effort to include an HTML

>> version of the IDL documentation. In addition to taking up almost 30% of

>> the total file space, it created a third method of distributing IDL

>> documentation (Original FrameMaker files, Adobe Acrobat, and HTML).

>> This is in addition to the platform specific on-line help. The decision was

>> made to eliminate the HTML files and concentrate on the overall quality of the

>> documentation in PDF format.

>> . . .

Can't resist replying....

For me, improving the quality of the documentation is the ultimate goal. The second (debatable...should be first?) should be the ease with which information is retrieved from the on-line doc's. The format that it is in is beyond secondary. The fact that RSI is paying attention to file space when considering the options is a good sign. I like documentation to be as comprehensive as the next fella, but 30% of the IDL distribution?

If one were keen to add in their own local routine doc's in line, why should it matter whether it's HTML or clickable PDF/PS? I don't see why creating any of these formats is particularly difficult. A WYSIWUG gui to write the documentation (taken, of course, from the procedure or function prologue) and output the result in a form that the IDL Online help reader understands

cheers,

paulv

p.s. 2 posts in one morning....I gotta cut back on coffee. Sheesh.

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