
Subject: Re: IDL5.3 and documentation

Posted by [robert.m.candey.1\[2\]](#) on Fri, 21 May 1999 07:00:00 GMT

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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:
>
> I wanted to give you a response to the wishlist you posted recently to the
> newsgroup comp.lang.idl-pv-wave. I'm the IDL/ION Product Manager. In your
> list, you had some very good comments and I wanted to make sure you recieved
> a response to each of the issues. If you have comments or questions on these
> or any other issues, please let me know.
>
>> 1) Enable help to be read using NETSCAPE.
>
> Research Systems makes every effort to make the online documentation as
> convenient and easy to use as possible. To this end, we distribute our
> documentation in the most widely accepted manner in the software industry.
> Online documentation is distributed in Adobe Acrobat format (.PDF). This
allows
> better document handling as well as being more efficient with disk space.
>
> 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.
> ...

My vote is to use only HTML (and eventually XML) for documentation in place of 3 of those 4 formats (and especially the platform-specific help format). Surely all users have a browser that can be used to read the documentation and it allows us to add local docs as well. Images perhaps should be in PNG format. This will allow easy changing of font size and other display features to meet various needs and provides a ready format for searching. It also allows tie-ins with web-based tutorials and would allow us to point to features as URLs in this group. I'd asked for HTML for awhile and am distressed it is going away.

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