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Subject: Re: Online help with non-windowing devices  
Posted by [landsman](#) on Fri, 30 Jun 1995 07:00:00 GMT  
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> I have extensive sets of my own help files  
> that I merge into the system help databases, but with this bloody new  
> hyperhelp (piece of crap if you ask me) you can only merge files in .hlp  
> format for which there are no compilation routines provided. When you run  
> MAN\_PROC it sees nothing because IDL v4.0 comes with no .help files in the  
> help/ dir under the IDL tree. What you have to do is go into the pro dirs in  
> the tree and build your own sets of .help files using MK\_LIBRARY\_HELP and  
> then dump those files into the help/ dir. Then MAN\_PROC will see them. I've  
> given up on hyperhelp and use widget\_olh pretty much all the time.

Well, it *is* quite useful to have the complete IDL documentation on-line in  
hypertext format. It probably would have been appreciated a lot more, though,  
if it wasn't for the annoyance of having to use separate help facilities for  
RSI-created and user-created procedures.

I do have a somewhat pedantic complaint about the use of the "?" symbol to  
access the hyperhelp. The "?" facility  
was unique in the IDL syntax, since it could be immediately followed by a  
character string (e.g. IDL>?ROUTINES ), and thus minimized the required  
keystrokes. Note that any user-defined help procedure requires the use of at  
least 3 characters, (1) the (at least) one-letter procedure name, (2) a comma,  
and (3) a quotation mark, (e.g. IDL>h,'ROUTINES ).  
For that reason, our group has always modified the MAN\_PROC procedure so that  
we could quickly get immediate help on any RSI or user-created procedure, e.g.

IDL>?REBIN or IDL>?MYPROC

But the hypertext help now claims the "?" facility, and it doesn't really need  
it. The hypertext help is something that one normally only launches once in  
a session and keeps as a background window until the IDL exit. (Or even  
longer, since the hypertext help can be run outside of IDL.) And the "?"  
facility no longer accepts any parameters.

--Wayne Landsman

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