
Subject: Re: Who have an electrical book of IDL in English?

Posted by [JD Smith](#) on Mon, 15 Jan 2007 17:11:39 GMT

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On Fri, 12 Jan 2007 10:24:17 -0500, Ben Tupper wrote:

> David Fanning wrote:

>> tianyf@gmail.com writes:

>>

>>> I think you should really learn the most things from IDL's online help

>>> documents. They are designed for beginners, with a lot of examples. Try

>>> them, and you will learn a lot.

>>

>> I don't doubt you will learn a lot. Whether that's the

>> *best* way to learn IDL or not, I'm not so sure. I know

>> when I was first learning IDL I had to read the User's

>> Guide front to back twice before I could figure out how

>> to draw a line plot. Things have improved a lot since

>> then, but not so much "use the on-line help" would be

>> my first recommendation for learning to write IDL programs. :-)

>>

>

> Speaking of online help...

>

> You may recall that long ago Andrew Cool and I fussed with an online

> help system for IDL 5.5 that used IDLWAVE resources to get around the

> PDF help system that was then provided with IDL.

>

> Imagine my surprise this week when I accidentally type ...

>

> IDL> xdl

>

>

> What the heck?!?

>

> Digging a little deeper I have found that...

>

> IDL> xdl, /no_block

>

> while not pretty, is pretty handy. That said, I think the new online

> help system, regardless of what I might think of the contents, is very good.

That seems to parse the doc header of all !DIR/.pro routines, but doesn't display internal routines (e.g. widget_control). My old IDLWAVE stuff actually parsed the old PDF docs into HTML, trimming all the cruft, and attempting to format it readably, while skimming off routine information (calling sequence, keywords, etc.) and creating links. It was a hack, which luckily isn't needed anymore, since

RSI/ITTVIS is good enough to ship with each an every IDL copy an XML catalog of their new improved HTML help system.

The way I avoid two monitors: simply summon context help as needed directly from the text in IDLWAVE with M-?. The IDL Assistant pops up with the exact topic/keyword/class/routine/sysvar/control structure/etc all queued up. Then I minimize the window and continue on.

I probably invoke C-c ? (routine info, usually to recall the quasi-random calling syntax and get argument order right) once every 1min, and M-? (context help) every 5min. They, to me, are the "killer features" of IDLWAVE. When I program in other languages, like Perl, I really miss that functionality.

JD
