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Subject: Re: painful IDL 7 online help

Posted by [Douglas Dirks](#) on Mon, 23 Jun 2008 21:41:04 GMT

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On Jun 20, 6:13 am, LC's No-Spam Newsreading account

<nos...@mi.iasf.cnr.it> wrote:

- > Our institute just switched to IDL 7.
- >
- > I find that accessing the online help interface ( ? command) has become
- > extremely painful.
- >
- > My environment is Linux Suse 9.2, and I use fvwm as window manager (with
- > two desktops with four workspaces each). Incidentally I have configured
- > the window manager so that my web browser (firefox) always opens in a
- > dedicated workspace.
- >
- > And of course I usually run idl in another (any other) workspace.
- >
- > In the past when I typed ? command in my idl session (runtime "idl"
- > command, no development environment !) it opened an online help window
- > in the same workspace. Now the help window is opened in the firefox
- > workspace. This is painful enough.
- >
- > What is more painful is that each time I click on a link in the help
- > pages, they open a new window each time. With no obvious way of closing
- > them other than the window manager menu bar, there is quickly a plethora
- > of help windows saturating the screen.
- >
- > Apparently neither the usual firefox mouse tricks to open link in same
- > window or tab in same window, nor the firefox preferences are honoured.
- >
- > This de facto makes the help environment unusable (e.g. to get the
- > necessary information on a seldom used command and associated keywords)

The behavior of the Eclipse help system on which IDL's help system is based appears to be quite sensitive to the version of the GTK+ library.

The IDL workbench and help system will run on systems with a minimum GTK+ version of 2.4, but will run much more smoothly when GTK+ version 2.10 or higher is installed.

I don't have access to a SUSE 9.2 system, but our experience is that systems with GTK+ 2.10 or higher will use the Eclipse "internal" help browser by default. (It actually uses a Mozilla or Firefox rendering engine, but it appears as a stand-alone help browser rather than in your normal web browser.) GTK+ 2.10 systems also do not exhibit the behavior

where a new browser window opens each time you click a link, whereas some GTK+ 2.4 systems do.

As I said, I don't have SUSE system handy, but on the machines I have access to the following command gives you information about the GTK version:

```
rpm -q gtk2
```

IF your system has an older GTK+ library, and IF there is an IDL user at your site with a newer version (GTK+ 2.10 came out in July 2006), you could check to see whether they experience the same difficulties. I don't know if upgrading either the entire OS or just the GTK+ library would be an option, but it's the best suggestion I have to make the help system more useful.

Regards,

Doug Dirks

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