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Subject: Re: redirection of help

Posted by [knight](#) on Tue, 20 Oct 1992 12:30:51 GMT

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In article <1992Oct19.142045.3309@aragorn.unibe.ch>, magun@iam.unibe.ch (A. Magun IAP) writes:

|> Dear IDL-users,

|>

|> how can one redirect the output of the help command to a string

|> variable or file? - We need access to the name of a structure

|> during run time.

|>

|> Andreas Magun

|>

|>

Unless there has been a change since version 2.3.x, you can't redirect help output. I've asked RSI to incorporate a redirection capability because, as in your case, there are times when the help text can provide information. One example is the size in bytes of a structure, which was only available from the help until the addition of the following:

```
IDL> z={a:bytarr(9),b:0.}
```

```
IDL> print,n_tags(z,/length)
```

```
16
```

(Note that you get the length of the structure in bytes in memory on the current machine---not the length of the variables it contains. If you want the latter, David Stern suggested writing the structure to a file and using the size tag returned by the fstat structure.)

Another example where the help redirection would have an advantage is in documenting your variables in an output file. The help is reported to the journal file, but I have found occasions when I wanted to produce a description of a variable in another output file, for example, when I am doing a calculation for signal-to-noise and want to record the current parameter values.

In summary, I have found occasions when redirecting help would be useful. I would like to see redirection of help incorporated into IDL.

Fred

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